

The journal 1996—2021

Rob Siebers, Editor

The New Zealand Journal of Medical Laboratory Science (Journal) has been published continuously since 1946. Upon inception the 75th anniversary of the New Zealand Institute of Medical Laboratory Science (NZIMLS) and the Journal this article chronicles the preceding 25 years, 1996 to 2021. A previous article chronicled the Journal from 1946 to 1995 upon the 50th anniversary of the NZIMLS (1).

In 1996 the Editor was Rob Siebers from the University of Otago, Wellington. Rob took over the Editorship from Marie Gillies in 1994 and has been Editor continuously until present time. In case something unforeseen was to happen to the Editor, a Deputy Editor was appointed in November 2003. This was Ann Thornton from the University of Otago, Wellington and she served in that position until April 2011. From then on the following were appointed as Deputy Editor: Terry Taylor from SCL, Dunedin in August 2011; Collette Bromhead from Aotea Pathology, Wellington in August 2015; Michael Legge from University of Otago, Dunedin in April 2018; and Julie Creighton, Canterbury Health Laboratories in April and August 2019 as joint Deputy Editor with Michael Legge.

In order to offset production costs, the Journal has always carried commercial advertising. In 1983 Trish Reilly from Auckland was appointed as advertising manager to separate this aspect from editorial managing. Trish continued in this role until April 2012 when Fran van Til from the NZIMLS Executive Office took on this function. The Journal had been printed by Institute Press, Auckland since 1983 until November 2013 when printing was shifted to Christchurch with the current printers being Griffin Press. Since late 2013 formatting of the Journal, previously undertaken by the Editor, has been done by Sharon Tozer of the NZIMLS Executive Office.

From 1996 to 1998, four issues were published each year. Due to low submissions of articles, printing was limited to three issues per year from 1999 onwards. Published peer reviewed articles from 1996 to 2009 remained constant at an average of eight articles per year (range: 4-11). This increased in the 2010-2018 period when an average of 13 articles per year (range: 11-14) were published. An increase in published peer reviewed articles occurred in 2019 when 19 articles were published, rising steeply to 40 articles in 2020. The large number in 2020 may have been due to authors having to isolate during the Covid-19 pandemic and thus having increased time to write. This has also been experienced by many international journals.

In 2013 the Editor persuaded the NZIMLS Council to make the Journal platinum open access. In the platinum open access model, authors retain copyright to their articles under a creative commons attribution license and may freely distribute their articles anywhere provided the source (the Journal) is acknowledged. The open access model is widely used by many journals and publishers, however, in order to retain copyright the authors pay the publishers a fee upon acceptance of their manuscript, often to the tune of a thousand dollars or more. Under the platinum model authors retain copyright but do not pay author fees and the cost of producing the journal is born by the journal's owners, as is the case of the NZIMLS Journal. This makes our Journal attractive to overseas authors, especially those from countries where their institutions do not have the resources to pay for author fees and that is why we have seen an increase in submissions from overseas authors. The downside is that a large number of overseas submissions are of poor quality and currently we reject nearly half of overseas submissions after internal and external peer review. Our Journal is also indexed by SCOPUS, the 2nd most important database after PubMed and over the years we have seen an increase in citations to Journal articles by international journals. Since 2000 nearly 30% of Journal articles have been cited internationally at least once. Interestingly, the top four most cited Journal articles were from overseas, the top one from Nigeria (2).

The Journal also publishes other articles than peer reviewed ones. Thus, a number of Editorials, letters to the Editor, book reviews, and news items from the universities and Special Interest Groups have been published. Each issue also contains the Pacific Way column reporting on activities of the Pacific Pathology Training Centre, which provides training and support to medical laboratories in the South Pacific. This column has been ongoing since 1983. Also published yearly is the TH Pullar Memorial Address, which is given by a prominent member or pathologist upon invitation by Council at the NZIMLS Annual Scientific Meeting. Since 2017, Michael Legge has written the Science Digest column, highlighting interesting snippets from international publications. Lately we have also published the abstracts from the Otago University BMLSc 4th year students' projects. A few of these have resulted in full publications.

In 2006 the Journal questionnaire was initiated in order for New Zealand medical laboratory personnel to obtain CPD points. Initially, it contained 10 questions derived from the Journal articles in a true/false format. Participants had to get at least 7 out of 10 questions right to obtain 10 CPD points. This was changed in 2007 when participants had to give answers to the questions and get at least 8 out of 10 correct. The questionnaire was popular with nearly 500 participants participating in the 1st questionnaire. Currently more than 1,000 attempt the questionnaire from each issue. In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, two journal questionnaires were introduced in each issue in order to give more opportunity to obtain CPD points as such opportunity was reduced as many scientific meetings were cancelled. Of note, if not for overseas articles, Journal questions would have not been able to be derived from a number of issues over the years.

The Journal has gone from strength to strength, especially over the last few years. It is truly an international journal, despite the New Zealand in its title. The Journal has adopted many editorial policies from the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) of which the Journal's Editor is currently President of. The journal's success has been due to many people: the Editorial Board, Sharon Tozer at the NZIMLS Executive Office, the reviewers, the authors, and the support of the advertising companies. Hopefully, its success will continue over the next 25 years. I am sure it will!

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