"60 Anos dos Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia: a próxima década"*

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Initially I wish to present my congratulations to Dr. Rubens Belfort, for the organization of such a Symposium and thank him very much for inviting me to represent the Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia. It is a great honour. Thank you.

The subject of this Symposium is about the next decade. Which means: what about the future? That is a challenging question which defeats all who try to answer it. What will happen within the next hour? Difficult to be sure. What, then, about the next decade? I would be God or a damned fool to discourse upon it. Neither of the two but, any way, as a scientific editor who, at least some times, thinks is a God and behaves as a fool, I will make considerations about what I believe may happen.

First, the essence of a publication. Ideas and work, inspiration and transpiration need authors. The crescent spreading of informations, the increasing diversity of equipments and methods, but mainly the ascentional level of our courses of post-graduation, that is, of academic titles of Masters and Doctors, certainly will favour more and more authors to appear. Faccilities for their expressions are increasing, also. So that, disputes for the space on a conventional publication as the "Arquivos" will become harder. Alternative media for the publications, or even other conventional magazines may appear, but the important point is that the emergence of more authors will require people to select them, to judge the validity of their works, to endorse them. The support of referees will be always and everywhere a criteria for the assurance of scientific readings. This seems to be a simple truism for people of the most developed countries, but I believe that the recognition of the peer reviewing will tend to increase, even for them.

For instance: I don't understand why a sound criticism, an impersonal report, as any analysis of a scientific referee has to be, should be kept as confidential. I don't understand why a referee's comment is not specifically published as a short appendix of the paper, preserving the author's original idea, but enriching it, or giving dialectical reasons to comfront it. Why the specific credits for such an important scientific activity is so avoided? I suppose that, on the future, the editorial procedures will become clearer but, on the meantime, I would like very much to discuss those questions.

The second comment refers to the contents of a scientific publication. It is a great mistake to suppose they all have to have the same objectives. It is usually expected that a scientific publication has to announce creative ideas, original observations and new experimental data. This is intrinsically important for the basic science. But for the areas of knowledge where practical applications are needed, as for instance, Ophthalmology, they are not sufficient. Established subjects have also to be constantly up-dated by summary of lectures and meetings, thematic revisitations and others, so that a continuous educational flow may enlighten and invigorate the profesional knowledge of the reader. The Arquivos Brasileiros de Oftalmologia is the oficial instrument of the Brazilian Council of Ophthalmology for such a task, so that we can not, we will not relinquish those functions. In fact, I believe the Arquivos, without loosing their traditions, have to become more associative, introducing sessions where readers, also, can make comments about the papers, about the policy of the publications and openly discuss any other specific subject which may be of general concern.

My third point is about how publications will be presented on the next future. That means, Internet and the like will affect publication of papers? Well, yes and no. Yes, because they improve the speed of the interactions. Publications once presented by electronic media will be more rapidly consumed. But vertiginous conversation will be limited in quality by itself. By the lack of reflexive thoughts, which means time. Information needs time to be prepared, it requires more time to be digested, and still more time to be tested or to have their effects evaluated. Velocity is not

* Palestra proferida no XX Simpósio Internacional Moacyr Álvaro - SIMAsp 97 - 22 de fevereiro de 1997

essentially a good counsellor in science. Fast food may be sometimes interesting, but definitely is not the best way to be fed, I think. On the other hand, the essence of publications will not change: writings will be always a symbologic manifestation of cultures, a necessity of communication among people and between ages. Obviously writings may be kept in microfilms, in CD-ROMS and, surely, other more compact technological products, a clear advantage upon the physical constraints of volume and weight of papers. But papers have also their charm and I can not foresee how they could be entirely discarded. Men search for changes. We are intrinsically revolutionary, since we incessantly look for improvements. But we are also conservative and because of such attitude I strongly believe that, at least during the time of our lives, papers will remain being used. For publications I mean. Any way, I suppose we may follow discussing such a subject at least during the next decade...

This reminds me of the tale about the lecture in which the teacher said: "In conclusion, there are no doubts that the Sun will dye in five billions years from now". To which a scared pupil reacted: "Excuse me, sir, how long have you said? "Five **billions**". "Oh, thank you, that is very good. I had understood five **millions**".

Thank you.

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