

Editorial

Lost in translation?

“Neither can embellishments of language be found without arrangement and expression of thoughts, nor can thoughts be made to shine without the light of language.”

Cicero (106BC–43BC)

In this issue of *Acta Neuropsychiatrica*, in addition to a number of exciting original articles, we examine how some aspects of research are failing to be communicated to a wider audience. This is perhaps not unique to neuropsychiatry, but given its nascency, it is perhaps less aware of the nature and needs of its audience. I am therefore thankful to Cleary et al. for broaching this perplexing issue in an invited editorial that appraises how research should be communicated to patients and carers (1).

Nowadays, more so than ever, because of the widespread availability of information on the Internet, patients are seemingly able to access an abundance of research, or are they? In this uncertain and evolving context, it is important for science to maintain its objectivity and provide a ‘gold standard’. Patients and researchers alike need to be able to discriminate easily between that which is opinion and that which is fact. Unfortunately, dogma can obfuscate this distinction and although there is a ‘wealth’ of information, the quality of much of it remains poor. Conversely, much of today’s science has made itself impenetrable with increasing specialisation and the necessary development of totally ‘new languages’. One only has to read papers in the fields of genetics or neuroimaging to realise that the detailed methodology and technical information requires sophisticated prior understanding. This makes meaningful interpretation of findings difficult and the associated messages can often be lost.

Another aspect of modern day research that has become increasingly complex is that of statistical analysis. Hence, in this issue, this matter is aptly addressed in our regular section on Statistically Speaking by Hadzi-Pavlovic (2). As the Journal advances, it is my hope that the unique sections in *Acta Neuropsychiatrica*, namely Brain Bytes, Statistically Speaking, Pictures and Prose and Intervention Insights will collectively provide an accessible account of some of the many facets of neuropsychiatry. It is, therefore, fitting that in this issue’s Pictures and Prose, Lopez-Munoz et al. (3) pay homage to Lafora, a pre-eminent Spanish neuropsychiatrist, who lacks the attention he deserves. Perhaps, in this too, language has played a role. It is important therefore that as scientists and clinicians, we take linguistic care to ensure that our messages are not lost in translation.

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References

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3. LOPEZ-MUNOZ F, MOLINA J, DE PABLO S, ALAMO C, Gonzalo R. Lafora: a pioneer of neuropsychiatry. *Acta Neuropsychiatr* 2007;**19**:254–255.