Per ardua ad astra

So, there is that sense of us looking forever forward, balanced on the cusp of a new year. This causes me to consider the nature of time. Aristotle defined it as that aspect of motion which makes us aware of change. The present, fleeting and ephemeral, passing quickly like grains of sand through outstretched fingers. The past, a richly coloured tapestry, redolent with each of the senses well served, calls to us unbidden. The future, much less certain, a vacuum waiting to be filled and, therefore, painted in neutral vapid shades. The most important task for *Annals* at this time is to bid farewell to Kluwer Academic Publishers and warmly welcome Oxford University Press (OUP). OUP was born in the white heat of the information technology revolution of the late 15th century, with the first book being printed in Oxford in 1478, only two years after Caxton set up the first printing press in England. The University itself obtained a decree confirming its privilege to print books in 1586. Today OUP is the world’s largest university press and, as a full department of the University, has charitable status allowing its profits to be used to further excellence in research, scholarship and education. It is this commitment that has led organisations such as the US National Cancer Institute, the European Molecular Biology Organisation and now ESMO to trust their journals to its care. In this context, I must also welcome Stanford University’s HighWire Press, a child of the late 20th century’s own information technology revolution. HighWire Press, also a university department, also a non-profit organisation, will partner OUP to produce the online version of *Annals*.

The discerning amongst you will have already noted the strikingly modern cover, the improved pagination and table of contents and, above all, a visibly superior Web service. Clearly, *Annals of Oncology* is not its outer cover, nor is it a reordering of its electronic presence, it stands on the quality of its science and the impact this has on how we deliver cancer care. Therefore, one of the decisions made by the Editorial team is to be much more selective about accepting papers for publication. This is particularly true of phase II trials, to which the following criteria, agreed at the last editorial meeting, will now apply: phase II studies will be considered of interest if they consider a rare tumour type, a new drug or combination, if the message is new, the schedule is new or the endpoints are new. Studies that do not add significant new data in one of these ways will not be considered for publication in *Annals*.

We have strengthened the Editorial Board, and I would like to welcome the following new members: K. Antman, C. Boekemeyer, A. Lichter, K. Öberg, M. Pfleundschuh, R. Rosell, A. Roth, C. N. Sternberg, N. Thatcher, T. Tursz and J. Zalcberg.

As I mentioned at this time last year, we have established a series of prizes, recognising the best paper in each of the following categories: translational science; phase I; phase II; and phase III. The prizes, each one worth EUR 1000, are being judged by an editorial subcommittee and winners will be announced shortly. The prizes are predicated on innovation, scientific quality and potential impact on the field, each of the pillars upon which *Annals* is founded. This will serve as a means of rewarding and recognising those researchers who support the *Journal* and strive with us to achieve scientific excellence.

What would Robert Burns, Scotland’s greatest poet have to say about all this? He was a ploughman and although educated and in possession of a vocabulary far above that of his social rank, he was essentially a poet of the people who chose to write predominantly in his native Scots tongue. This did not limit his extraordinary international popularity—every New Year, the English-speaking world welcomes the coming year by joining hands and singing his greatest song ‘Auld lang syne’ (remembering times past). Burns would remind us of our humanity, ‘A man’s a man for a’ that’, and not to become pompous. Sitting in church one morning he noticed a flea which had jumped nimbly onto the bonnet of a grand local lady. Insulated in her arrogance, the lady assumes her usual haughty procession through the church, unaware of her infestation. Burns observed, wryly

‘O wad some Pow’r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us’

*To a louse*

There is truth in this. Each of us requires a mirror which returns a reflection of our true worth, not who we think we are, or who others might tell us that we are. This was Burns’ great ability, to strip away those outer obfuscating layers and lay bare, for good or ill, one’s basic worth. Let us venture forward then, invigorated by the coming of the New Year, a new opportunity for *Annals*, and aim for the stars, tempered in humility.

D. J. Kerr
Editor-in-Chief, University of Oxford, Department of Clinical Pharmacology, Oxford, UK