

An interview with Stefanie Dimmeler, Chief Editor

In January, *EMBO Molecular Medicine* named Stefanie Dimmeler the journal's first academic Chief Editor. Stefanie Dimmeler is Director of the Institute of Cardiovascular Regeneration, Center for Molecular Medicine at the University of Frankfurt am Main (Germany) and she already has great plans for the journal as she details below.

EMBO Molecular Medicine: Could you describe your background and ongoing work?

SD: After completing my PhD in biology, I joined an experimental surgery division at the University of Cologne to work on clinically oriented projects involving trauma and sepsis. I was later recruited to establish the Division of Molecular Cardiology in Frankfurt. Since then, I have been investigating basic mechanisms of endothelial cell biology and endothelial progenitor cells but also tackling clinically oriented projects in vascular biology. We have been focusing on cell therapy approaches for the treatment of ischemic heart disease and our research culminated in ongoing clinical trials of cardiovascular repair with human progenitor cells. More recently, we concentrated on microRNA-based therapeutics for cardiovascular disease.

EMM: What are the main challenges in translating basic findings to the clinic?

SD: In the new field of cell therapy, getting approval by regulatory authorities was time consuming. Moreover, we were initially worried about the quality of cell preparations in a routine setting and performed extensive animal studies to confirm their functional activity. A major challenge when we started the phase II

trial was funding. In comparison to basic science, larger scale clinical trials are extremely expensive, not only due to the cost of patient treatment but also because of patient insurance issues.

A further challenge for physicians is to free time from their clinical duties so that they can conduct translational work and establish new concepts in clinical trials. The generation of professional interdisciplinary teams including PhDs working in clinical departments also helps. In contrast to the US, where it is common to have a part time job in research and in the clinic, in Europe this is not really established.

EMM: Why did you become Chief Editor of *EMBO Molecular Medicine*?

» ...I am dedicated to translational medicine! «

SD: First, I hesitated to accept yet another commitment. However, after meeting with the editorial team and after a second thought, I got enthusiastic. We need a high quality journal that bridges the worlds of basic and clinical science. Linking the high reputation of EMBO in the molecular biology world to high quality clinical work and patient studies is a very attractive way to succeed in this aim. Given the achievements of *EMBO Molecular Medicine* so far, I thought that it is worth to put energy in this endeavour—I am dedicated to translational medicine!

EMM: In your opinion, what are the journal's achievements?

SD: Overall, *EMBO Molecular Medicine* is doing extremely well. The journal has a fantastic team of experienced professional editors. The senior editors and the advisory editorial board members belong to the best scientists in the world representing the different fields of molecular medicine.

EMBO Molecular Medicine published its first issue in April 2009 and has since established itself as a reliable source of high quality translational research. During the last two years, the journal published several landmark papers in a range of medically relevant areas, including neurodegenerative diseases, cancer research, RNAi-based therapeutics, and inflammation. The papers published in *EMBO Molecular Medicine* have a very high impact already and we are looking forward to the announcement of our first impact factor this summer.

EMM: What are your future plans for *EMBO Molecular Medicine*?

SD: My first aim is to increase the visibility of the journal: *EMBO Molecular Medicine* brings together basic molecular and clinical science and aims to publish the best translational research. EMBO traditionally is very strong in molecular science, however, it is not yet sufficiently established in clinical science. We need to connect these fields and make *EMBO Molecular Medicine* better visible to the medical community. For example, the journal will organize an international conference ("Molecular Insights for Innovative Therapies", December 1-3, 2011) featuring leaders in the field of molecular medicine and translational sciences.

Second, *EMBO Molecular Medicine* is already very strong in some medical disciplines such as cancer and neurodegeneration and we will work hard to attract more papers in fields such as cardiovascular medicine, immunology or infectious diseases. *EMBO Molecular Medicine* has the vision to be open for and to cover all medical disciplines.



Stefanie Dimmeler

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