

## EDITORIAL

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### SEEKING INFORMATION

Mário Cícero Falcão

#### *What a wonderful world*

We are commemorating the 500 years, which have past since the discovery of Brazil. I confess, I felt delighted when I saw the 'Letter of Discovery' in which Pero Vaz de Caminha, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1500, tells D. Manuel, King of Portugal, about the discovery of the new territory.

The objective of this brief introduction is to emphasize the importance of communication in the History of Humanity, from the rudimentary printing press of Gutemberg, to the modern press, the telegraph, telephone, radio and television, ending with computer communication through Internet.

Up-to-date information is fundamental for the growth of Humanity. The necessity to update information runs parallel to the velocity with which this information is available to us. The evolution of the communication network is leading to the globalization of information. The means available today to access this information is without doubt the Internet.

As a result of the constant additions of propedeutic and thera-

peutic resources to the medical practice the task of updating medical information is not an easy one. As the quantity of information increases constantly the effort which we have to make in order to be up-to-date is a recognized fact. Apart from the traditional publications (books, journals and magazines), the innumerable congresses and courses, and the day-to-day happenings, we can add as well, the proliferation of medical material through the Internet.

In 1964 Arpanet, which can be considered as one of the first computer network aimed at education and military research, appeared in the United States. In the 80's, starting from TCP/IP the Internet was born. From then on there has been a tremendous increase in the links between computers permitting instant access to a variety of informations, medical information included.

The number of sites related to health doesn't stop growing. The advantages of being able to access information which could only before, be clarified by a doctor, has

contributed to this increase. The clarification of doubts, availability of information about diseases and even opinions about diagnosis have also contributed to the number of visits to these sites.

Continuous Medical Education is important for the early diagnosis and adequate treatment of the most varied types of illnesses. Hence there is the necessity to seek and up-to-date information due to the great scientific growth of medicine.

This rapid proliferation while certainly bringing benefits could also generate problems: the information could be spread without adequate analysis that is without proven scientific data. It is important for everyone who accesses these sites to verify their trustworthiness and to aim specifically for well-known medical institutions.

In summary, apart from becoming an excellent tool through which information and medical experience can be carried out, the principal benefit of the Internet has been to integrate the scientific community.