

Foreword

How time flies when you are having fun! The journal has already entered its fifth year! And fun it has been last year ... First, the journal received its 2012 Impact Factor (IF) of 1.474. This was a surprise to the editorial office, as we had hoped for a good IF, but did not expect it to be this good. Our first IF is already very close to that of other respected journals in the field. As a consequence of this pleasant surprise I have kept track of the course of the IF of 2013 in Web of Science. At the time of writing this foreword the IF is slightly below that of 2012, but I am not sure all published papers have already been entered in Web of Science, so we may climb a little more ...

Second, it has been great to see submissions increasing. Obviously these are not all accepted, but we have sufficient numbers of papers to start to worry about a backlog ...

Third, it has been fun working on a special issue that is due soon: a special issue on the effect of beneficial microbes on skin and hair. This issue is guest edited by Audrey Gueniche. It took a lot of effort from her to get all manuscripts reviewed and revised on time, so I am not sure it has been as much fun for her as it has been for me. For me, the fun came from seeing the quality of the papers (mostly reviews) that have been submitted.

The effect of the endogenous host microbiota or probiotics on obesity

To all intents and purposes it has been my own goal to publish another special issue, on the role of probiotics and the endogenous microbiota on obesity and overweight. I started contacting authors and I did receive a number of good manuscripts, but in total they were not sufficient to make a special issue out of them. I did not want to wait any longer with publishing the manuscripts that had been submitted already somewhere early last year. This is why some of these manuscripts have been clustered in this first issue of 2014 that lies before you. Others will follow in the next issue(s), and when all are out, we may gather them in a virtual (electronic) special issue on the website of Wageningen Academic Publishers. The 4 manuscripts in this issue are on (1) a case report where a prebiotic and anti-oxidant augment glucose control and increase the tolerability to metformin (Greenway *et al.*, 2014); (2) the role of the endogenous microbiota on adipose tissue expansion, glucose control and gut barrier function (Geurts *et al.*, 2014); (3) a review on the development of probiotic treatment for obesity (Mekkes *et al.*, 2014); and (4) the effect of the microbiota on epigenetic regulation of inflammation in type II diabetes and obesity (Remely *et al.*, 2014). Interestingly, the paper by Greenway was highlighted by the newsletter of NutraIngredients.com as an interesting study while it was still 'in press'.

Mechanisms and safety of probiotics

The same was true for the manuscript by Binnendijk and Rijkers (2013) that was published last year. This was flagged by NutraIngredients.com as 'researchers issuing guidance for (amongst other) EFSA applications'. More and more effort is being put into mechanisms and safety of probiotics to get sufficient data to pass the EFSA scrutiny, as also evidenced by contributions in the issue before you. First, in terms of safety, there is a contribution by Van den Nieuwboer *et al.* (2014) on the available evidence on the safety of probiotics and synbiotics in children under two years of age. The same group is working on similar reviews in elderly and immunocompromised individuals. Next Smug *et al.* (2014) have reviewed the data on yoghurt and probiotics in dietary guidelines of European member states. In terms of mechanisms, we have an elegant study by El Aidy *et al.* (2014) studying the response of the host to colonisation by the gut microbiota. They show that there is a transient inflammatory response that is required for proper mucosal homeostasis. The efficacy of *Bifidobacterium breve* NCC2950 to combat DSS-induced colitis was shown to be dependent on bacterial preparation (live, heat-killed or cell supernatant) and time of addition of the beneficial microbes (Hayes *et al.*, 2014).

Once more I am proud of the quality of the papers published in *Beneficial Microbes*, not only in this issue, but throughout last year as well. With numbers of submissions increasing, we can be more picky and select for top quality manuscripts. Hopefully this will have an impact on readership and eventually also the IF of the journal. We made a good start with the impact factor of 2012, but naturally we want to keep that up. Also, stay tuned for the next issue in 2014 (volume 5, issue 2) which is the special issue on the effect of beneficial microbes on skin and hair. It has some very interesting papers.

Koen Venema

Editor-in-chief

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