

## Editorial

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This issue of “Acta medica Lituanica” gives great consideration to one problem – retinopathy of prematurity (ROP). Although ROP is a very narrow area of ophthalmology, it is of great importance in the modern world. For some infants this disaster results in long years of complete blindness. Such patients better than anyone else act as a catalyst for physicians to perform research in finding new agents of this disease and look for better treatment modalities.

Retinopathy of prematurity is one of the youngest diseases in history of medicine. It was first described about 60 years ago, which is less than a lifetime of one human being.

We feel very much delighted to be together with those who stood at the sources of the struggle with this disease.

Retinopathy of prematurity first emerged in the developed world. In the developing and former communist countries this disease was thought to be nonexistent due to the fact that premature babies did not survive.

Rapid progress in scientific technologies, improved facilities, better communication and cooperation among specialists resulted in a significantly better care and survival of premature infants in developing countries. However, these countries faced a new problem which is the growing number of ROP cases.

The specific feature of the present issue is that it presents articles from developing countries which typically do not have a luxury to be published in western scientific journals. We see differences of the data from those developing countries and from the Western world.

Practitioners from Western countries can hardly imagine ROP developing in infants with the birth weight of 1500–2000 grams. However, Lithuanian and Bulgarian experience shows how rapid the progress is and how fast the differences between the East and the West are diminishing. A large number of cases and a new epidemic wave of ROP in the developing world in a sense have a very positive impact on scientific achievements. Indeed, it is significantly easier to develop scientific advances on a solid foundation of the experience of the developed countries.

Therefore, it is obvious that only cooperation between the Eastern and Western developed and developing countries can provide for achieving the common goal – complete eradication of retinopathy of prematurity. It is one of the utmost points that the day of the complete victory over ROP would come sooner than later.

In this regard, those employed in fighting with this disaster today will become the key historical people of this timeframe. This makes the publications presented in this issue even more valuable.

By working together, we shall play an increasing role in helping our patients overcome ROP and blindness induced by it. Let us give their parents hope. Let the coming generations learn about this disease only from the textbooks of history of medicine.

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