

## ANNOUNCING PLOS MEDICINE

### Mihai Ionac

By far, our University of Medicine does not have all the academic journals that our teachers and students need to keep abreast of current work in their fields of interest.

The main reason is price. Such journals, because of their limited circulations, are frightfully expensive. The specialized publishers that print these journals have obviously to recover their costs, if not to make a little profit. This is not easy, because costs keep going up.

Times are changing. Open access is gaining momentum. Authors around the world are submitting papers in ever-increasing numbers to open-access journals. Several prominent research sponsors, including the Wellcome Trust, the Max Planck Society, the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), and the Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche (INSERM), have recently pronounced that open access is the best way for the researchers they support to publish their work. Several established commercial and not-for-profit publishers have announced plans to experiment with open-access models for some or all of their journals.<sup>1</sup>

October 2004 will be launched PLoS Medicine, the second open-access journal published by the Public Library of Science (PloS), a non-profit organization of scientists and physicians committed to making the scientific and medical literature a public resource.

*PLoS Medicine* aims to provide open access to

the best medical research to researchers, to physicians and other caregivers, and to the public.<sup>2</sup>

The open access to medical research becomes a more and more important issue. There are more interested parties: patients and their advocates; biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies that develop drugs and medical devices; doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers; and health policy-makers at the national and international levels. The goal of the medical research enterprise is — or should be — scientifically, ethically, and socially responsible medicine, which means research that will benefit patients worldwide.

Unfortunately, the reality looks different. Large investments into basic research have not yet lived up to their full potential to save lives and improve their quality. Doctors, patients, and their advocates do not have ready access to the combined peer-reviewed evidence from medical research. The prices for the latest drugs often put them out of reach of patients in poor countries or poor patients in countries without universal healthcare systems.<sup>1</sup>

Open access to this literature will strengthen the medical research community by giving *all* free and immediate access to the latest medical research, along with new and more powerful search tools and links between the literature and other relevant information.<sup>3,4</sup>

*PLoS Medicine*, a truly broad medical journal is an ambitious project, because it promotes an integrated understanding of the patient — to make it easy for people to read outside their specialty area. “Doctors are systems biologists”, as one medical researcher put it, and inspiration can often be found in unfamiliar territory.

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## **REFERENCES**

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