



Unpredictable predictions

Is predicting a losing proposition? Let us hope not, for we have some of them in this first issue of 2010 from medical laboratory experts that you will want to read (with more online). You may even have a medical laboratory prediction or two of your own.

A recent movie plays up the Mayan prediction that the world ends on Dec. 21, 2012. But what if the Mayan calendar maker just stopped his calculations at this particular date because the conquistadors came calling?

Predictions emanate from all walks of life. From the 8th-century Oracle at Delphi, to 16th-century Nostradamus, to America's Edgar Cayce (the "sleeping prophet") and Punxsutawney Phil (the "groundhog prophet"), humans have longed to know what their futures hold.

We love to hear predictions. We love to read them. We even love to make them. Are not our New Year's resolutions merely predictions of what we hope to do or change in our own lives in the coming year?

Looking back at long-ago predictions can be amusing. Pierre Pacht likely said in all confidence: "Louis Pasteur's theory of germs is ridiculous fiction." Pacht, a physiology professor at Toulouse in 1872, perhaps should have gone on to invent "damage control."

By the time Charles Duell arrived at the U.S. Office of Patents, he knew enough to pronounce in 1899, "Everything that can be invented has been invented." (Yes, except for "damage control.") Actually, 1899 was much too soon for anyone to imagine that in 2010, the medical laboratory's selection of equipment included machines that plate Pasteur's germs (bacteria) onto Petri dishes

Living in a highly "computerized" world, we have also seen inventions that we might have once seen on "Flash Gordon." With electronic health records being incorporated into the medical laboratory and more equipment offering computerized functions to relieve manual labor, it is difficult to believe that while Computer Visionary Bill Gates has been on target almost all the time, even he once remarked: "No one will need more than 637 Kb of memory for a personal computer."

Then he went on to tell the 2004 World Economic Forum, "Two years from now, 'spam' will be solved." (Pardon me, Bill, but I need to spend a few minutes here emptying the "spam" out of my INBOX.)

Over the years, a number of knowledgeable folks predicted some of that computer stuff wrong: "There is no reason anyone would want a computer in his home (1977);" "... data processing is a fad that won't last out the year (1957);" "Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons (1949);" and "I think there is a world market for maybe five computers (1943)."

My favorite comment on predictions is Wilbur Wright's. The famous bicycle mechanic told France's Aero Club in 1908: "I confess that in 1901, I said to my brother Orville that man would not fly for 50 years. ... ever since, I have ... avoided all predictions."

Should we take Wilbur's lead? No, waiting to find out the answers is too much fun. If you do have a prediction or two of your own, send those along, and, in December 2010, we will see whether our predictions and yours are fulfilled or fun-filled.

cbersch@nelsonpub.com



MEDICAL LABORATORY OBSERVER Vol. 42, No. 1

Group Publisher

A. Verner Nelson
vnelson@nelsonpub.com

Editor

Carren Bersch
cbersch@nelsonpub.com

Managing Editor

Denise DiRamio
ddiramio@nelsonpub.com

Contributing Editors

Brad S. Karon, MD, PhD
Barbara Harty-Golder, MD, JD
C. Anne Pontius, MBA, CMPE, MT(ASCP)

VP Operations

John Harkola
jharkola@nelsonpub.com

Production

Emma McFarland
Daniel Curtis Byrd

Ad Contracts Manager

Laura Moulton
lmoulton@nelsonpub.com

Ad Traffic Manager

Kathleen Shook
kshook@nelsonpub.com

Circulation Manager

David Welsher

Subscriptions/ List Rentals

Rosemarie Chiaromonte
subscriptions@nelsonpub.com

Reprints

Mary Hall
(941) 966-9521 ext. 105
mhall@nelsonpub.com

ADVERTISING

East Coast/Midwest Sales (except IL)

Carol Vovcsko
(941) 966-9521 ext. 123
cvovcsko@nelsonpub.com

South/West Coast/Illinois Sales

Lora Harrell
(941) 966-9521 ext. 120
lharrell@nelsonpub.com

Classified/Recruitment Advertising

Larry Mahan
(941) 966-9521 ext. 110
lmahan@nelsonpub.com

Nelson Publishing Inc.

2500 Tamiami Trail N., Nokomis, FL 34275
Phone: (941) 966-9521 Fax: (941) 966-2590
www.mlo-online.com



MEDICAL LABORATORY OBSERVER (ISSN: 0580-7247). Published monthly, with an additional issue in August, by Nelson Publishing, Inc., 2500 Tamiami Trail N., Nokomis, FL 34275 (941) 966-9521. Subscription rates: \$96/year in the U.S.; \$118 Canada/Mexico; Intl. subscriptions are \$173/year (surface) and \$293/year (airmail). All issues of *MLO* are available on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Box 78, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Current single copies (if available) \$14 each (U.S.); and \$18 each (Intl.). Back issues (if available) \$16 each (U.S.); \$20 each (Intl.). Payment must be made in U.S. funds on a U.S. bank/branch within the continental U.S. and accompany request. Subscription inquiries: Rosemarie Chiaromonte, (941) 966-9521 ext. 148, Fax (941) 918-9359 or subscriptions@nelsonpub.com. *MLO* is indexed in the *Cumulative Index for Nursing and Allied Health Literature* and *Lexis-Nexis*. All *MLO* feature articles are peer reviewed. Title® registered U.S. Patent Office. Copyright® 2010 by Nelson Publishing Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage-and-retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher. Office of publication: Periodicals Postage Paid at Nokomis, FL 34275 and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to **MEDICAL LABORATORY OBSERVER**, 2500 Tamiami Trail N., Nokomis, FL 34275-3482.