



Lending a Helping Hand

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As I write this guest editorial, the world is coming into grips with modern terrorism. Terrorism has existed since time immemorial. Regardless of military might or resolve to hunt down all perpetrators of evil, it is doubtful that terrorism can be eradicated. Indeed, when we choose to bomb out terrorism, whether terrorists are killed or not, innocent people certainly are. An eye for an eye is shortsighted policy; rather, it is a good recipe for creating a blind world. Those that die in this fashion are made into martyrs and their children grow up to be the new generation of terrorists. Terrorism becomes a self-perpetuating vicious cycle, as evidenced from Palestine.

The reader would wonder, what this has to do with analytical chemistry in general or flow injection analysis in particular? My humble thesis is that if we could reduce the gap between the rich and poor nations, the gulf between the have and the have-nots, terrorism and many other ills could be substantially reduced. Education, especially technological infrastructure is vital to building the economy of developing and undeveloped countries. Flow-injectionists are perhaps unique among other scientists in that much of our technology is relatively simple and much of it is affordable. Indeed, the broad popular appeal of FIA across scientists in many countries, many of which are not especially wealthy, is traceable to this alone. FIA, more than any other tool in modern analytical chemistry, has proved to be a vehicle to practical problem solving through intellectual prowess, compared to brute machine or monetary power. Flow-injection and allied techniques thus constitute appropriate technology for developing countries.

Indeed, in developed countries, precious little new reaction chemistry is studied today. Many analytical chemists in the developed countries even regard study of reaction chemistries (without some big instrument being involved) as beneath their dignity. FIA is one area where new chemistry thrives worldwide and provides novel solutions to existing problems in conjunction with ever brighter inexpensive solid state light sources and the like.

To the senior readership of JFIA in Japan and other fortunate countries, I ask that please lend a helping hand. If you have people from less fortunate countries who wish to study in your laboratory and learn the beauty of what FIA can do, please give them your first consideration, perhaps even over a more competent candidate from a more fortunate part of the world. Who knows, beyond contributing to a more even world, you may end up saving our collective lives or those of our children.