

Editorial

Benjamin Disraeli is quoted as saying “Change is inevitable. Change is constant”. We have little doubt that we would unreservedly subscribe to the second part of this aphorism, for we seem to have been engaged in a rollercoaster of discussion and planning in the last few months. Some of the changes that these discussions have produced will already be apparent to both readers and authors alike; others will follow.

In the last year the most obvious change has been that the electronic manuscript submission and editorial system on the web has become “live”. The introduction of this was intended to be gradual but, in fact, the take-up was brisk and the system has rapidly become the major portal for manuscript delivery – and is being utilized more and more frequently. Indeed the measure of its popularity and success can readily be measured by the number of manuscripts received. At the time of writing the figures for the whole of the current year are not complete but in 2004 we received 673 manuscripts and in the first nine months of 2005 we have received an almost equal number (678). This rise in submissions shows no sign of abating and, indeed, shows every sign of increasing. The resultant workload has inevitably imposed an additional burden on many of our regular reviewers and, on occasions, the whole editorial system. We would therefore like to place on record our enormous appreciation of all the hard work done by Rosamund Greensted, our Production Editor, who has laboured conscientiously and with great composure to organize and integrate our efforts in the last year. On behalf of all of those associated with the *Journal*, we thank her. We would also like to record our appreciation of all the work done by our Assistant Editors – many of whom have been showered with manuscripts on a fairly regular basis in the last twelve months. In this regard it is perhaps invidious to single out any one person, but we would like to place on record our particular thanks to Liam Flood who has untiringly, and seemingly with great willingness, undertaken a large amount of additional reviewing and re-writing of scripts. In addition we would like to welcome Tim Woolford, Richard Irving and Professors Gendeh and Grewal who have joined us as Assistant Editors in the last year, and to thank Paul Montgomery who decided to retire from the fray after some years of diligent work on our behalf. We would also like to acknowledge and thank all those who have undertaken occasional reviews on behalf of the *Journal*. Their contribution has been invaluable and

is much appreciated. Their names are listed separately in this edition of the *Journal*.

Of course the electronic manuscript system has not only increased the volume of submissions and the workload but has also fundamentally changed the way in which we all work. There were some initial teething problems – and it would also be dishonest to pretend that, even now, all members of the editorial staff are equally enchanted with it. However the speed of the reviewing process has most definitely been improved and the cost savings for both authors and for the *Journal* have already made it indispensable. We are investing further to develop the website and, in that regard, we have been fortunate to secure the services of Nitesh Patel who has agreed to become our website editor and who is full of innovative ideas. With Nitesh, we are currently engaged in negotiations with *Tell*, who developed the editor's extranet, to expand the site to make it more interactive and effective for users in the future.

With some considerable sadness, and after a very competitive tendering process, we decided in the summer to part company with the Royal Society of Medicine Press, who have published us for the last six years, and with Headley Brothers who have printed the *Journal* since 1933. Such change is never easy and we say goodbye to those with whom we have been working for so long with great sadness. In particular Peter Richardson, Delia Siedle and Faye Cheeseman of RSM Press, and John Pitt of Headleys, will be missed. However we look forward to a new era with Cambridge University Press who, from the beginning of 2006, will be both publishing the *Journal* and organizing printing on our behalf. We believe that this move will more readily guarantee the *Journal* a sound economic footing as well as offering a more global reach and an even more adventurous electronic presence. The latter will include incremental publishing – so that authors will be able to see their work published electronically as soon as the editorial process is complete. This will frequently be well in advance of their work appearing in the paper *Journal* and, in tandem with electronic review, should allow manuscripts to be processed and published in a matter of weeks rather than months. This move should clearly be to the advantage of the majority of authors who, understandably, want to see their work published expeditiously.

Other changes are pending. We have had a very successful visit from the Charity Commission, which was orchestrated by Mike Hellyar our

Company Secretary. In anticipation of this we restructured the Board of Directors to provide a more cohesive group to serve JLO (1984) Ltd, which is the charitable foundation underpinning the *Journal*. In this regard we would both like to thank Mike for all of his hard work on our behalf. He has remained a steadfast and wonderfully reliable Company Secretary who has guided our affairs with considerable skill and deftness. We would also like to thank most warmly all those who have previously served as directors and we welcome Dr Robin Fox, previously editor of the *Lancet* and of the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, as a new member of the Board of Trustees. As a result of the review we will have to make some further changes to update our practice

and governance for the future and to reflect new guidelines and requirements that have emerged since the charity was first incorporated. We hope, that, by so doing, we will guarantee our levels of charitable giving for future generations.

Finally we thank all those of you who have contributed by subscribing and submitting to, and by reading, the *Journal*. We hope it reflects your needs – and would be interested to hear from you as to how you think it should develop. May we take this opportunity to wish you the best for the festive season and a prosperous and peaceful New Year.

GUY KENYON
ROBIN YOUNGS
EDITORS