

Editorial – December 2006

The end of the year produces an opportunity for us all to reflect on the endeavours and achievements of the preceding twelve months. Such a process can become somewhat nostalgic and, when that is so, verisimilitude and a sepia tingeing of reality can distort matters. However an element of retrospective appraisal is also healthy and in assessing the last year we shall endeavour to avoid the worst excesses of navel gazing that otherwise tends to pervade end of year editorials.

Certainly there is no doubt that the last twelve months has been busy. The principal event has been the advent of Cambridge University Press as our publishers. They took over the reins from The Royal Society of Medicine Press at the beginning of the last year and it is fair to say that this transition was remarkably smooth thanks, in no small measure, to Michael Hellyar our company secretary, who among many other responsibilities handled the transfer with his normal meticulous care. We owe him a great debt of gratitude for this – and also for all his other hard work on our behalf. There is no doubt that our subsequent partnership with Cambridge has opened up many new avenues as a result of their global reach and presence and of their skills in electronic publishing, which have been key elements for our success in the last year. In particular the advent of incremental publishing, which allows the publication of an article with a citable digital object identifier (DOI) on-line ahead of its appearing in paper has provided a significant benefit to authors as it allows their work to appear immediately in electronic format once the copy-editing and proof reading processes have been completed. We are aware that having a short interval between acceptance and publication is important and in order to facilitate this we will also see an increase in the number of pages in the monthly paper journal from the beginning of the new year. We have also taken the decision to stop publication of abstracts from other journals and, with this section omitted, we will be able to release more space each month to publish original work. We are grateful to the journal publishing team at Cambridge, and in particular to Gavin Swanson, Sue Perkins and Dan Edwards, who have provided day-to-day liaison with the *Journal's* editorial office and who have advised us on these matters and who have facilitated the publication process.

It is often said that there is nothing new in medicine and that apparent innovation is simply the resuscitation and rejuvenation of old ideas. Subscribers to the *Journal* will soon be able to test this hypothesis by electronic access to a fully searchable and complete archive of the *Journal*

dating back to 1887. This ambitious project is being jointly managed with Cambridge and promises to deliver a major educational resource by the middle of next year. Also in development is a file library containing images from articles published in the *Journal* together with “How I do it” video clips and archived multimedia PowerPoint presentations. Within the last year we have developed the website to allow download of articles to personal digital assistants (PDAs) through a free *AvantGo* account and an on-line continuing medical education calendar with links to course and conference organisers. We have also recently added a web watch section, which contains a large and comprehensive number of links to other otolaryngology websites. For all this we are extremely grateful to Nitesh Patel and to *Tell Communications*, our software partner, who have worked hard to make these developments possible.

The number of papers received continues to increase. The total number of papers submitted in the twelve months to September 2006 was 933, a 25% increase on the corresponding total for the previous year. Nearly all manuscripts are now processed through the website, which expedites peer review and publication as well as saving costs associated with postage, and in 2007 we hope to have in place a tracking system which will allow authors to follow their work electronically through the reviewing process. This increase in the flow of material gives us the opportunity to produce each issue from a larger pool and in turn, we hope, this gives each issue a better balance. But it is not only the quantity of manuscripts that has increased for, *pari passu*, the quality has also improved and we hope that we will continue to receive high quality basic and clinical research – the best and most important of which we will endeavour to fast track through the system. The increase in quality is reflected objectively in a progressive year on year increase in the *Journal's* impact factor in the last three years, which is most gratifying.

While this increased input is welcome it has, in turn, often severely stretched the *Journal's* editorial staff. The increased turnover has also, inevitably, extended the demands on the peer review process, and we remain extremely grateful to all of our assistant editors who have coped with the workload well and who have laboured hard on our behalf – largely without complaint. In the last year we have welcomed Musheer Hussain, Desmond Nunez and John Watkinson to their number and, with regret, have said goodbye to Marcus Brown – who has reviewed head and neck manuscripts conscientiously for the last three years on our behalf and who has decided to retire from the fray. Orchestrating this has been our Managing Editor, Rosamund

Greensted and we readily acknowledge the huge contribution made to the editorial process by Rosamund who has proved, yet again, that she is indefatigable, imperturbable and efficient while seemingly retaining her sense of humour. We could not have managed without her. Latterly she has been assisted by Iona Copley and we would also like to thank Iona for her input and hard work during the last year.

The *Journal* continues to enjoy links with other organisations. One of the most successful enterprises during the last year was the visit to the United Kingdom of the Journal of Laryngology and Otology/Royal Society of Medicine Visiting Professors – Paul Fagan (Otology) and Peter Koltai (Laryngology and Rhinology). They had a successful British tour accompanied by Section Presidents Robert Mills and Martin Bailey and *Journal* Editor Robin Youngs. They delivered presentations of the highest quality some of which have been recorded for eventual broadcast on the *Journal* website. We also continue to develop links with other Otolaryngology journal editors through the Consortium of Editors in Otolaryngology. This group, who mainly emanate from North America, have agreed to share information and adopt common policies particularly with regard to author misconduct and, in particular, redundant or duplicate publication and we expect a joint statement from the Consortium early in the

New Year. We already have a formal ethical policy, which is available to view on the website, and which we would encourage authors to read. Our links with sister journals in North America were also cemented by a very successful presence at the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery meeting in Toronto, and we anticipate that this North American presence will become a regular feature of the *Journal's* marketing strategy.

Finally it is the case that written communication in medicine continues to present many challenges and it is sometimes the case that manuscripts require not just proof-reading and copy-editing but also a degree of interpretation. We are therefore also extremely grateful to the exegetic skills of Lisa Colledge, Annalisa Welch and Theresa Clarke who have proof-read and copy-edited the tangled argot of abbreviations and idiomatic syntax that seems to cloak many manuscripts. Their help has been indispensable. We also obviously wish to thank you, our subscribers and readers, for supporting the *Journal* and we hope that you continue to find it and the accompanying website stimulating and helpful in your everyday practice. We wish you all the very best for the forthcoming festivities and hope you have a prosperous and happy New Year.

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