

Editor's Briefing

YOUR JOURNAL NEEDS YOU!

I started writing this at a conference on publication and peer review in biomedical journals in Chicago, organised by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and the *British Medical Journal*, where over 500 people spent 3 days focusing on how to make publication in the biomedical literature as clear, honest, and reliable as possible. I want to take this opportunity in the October Briefing to ask you for your help in making this publication — the *BJGP* — as good and useful as possible; recognising that, for many years, we have tried to serve a diverse readership, which includes practising clinicians, medical educators and trainers, researchers, managers, and patients in primary care and beyond. At this conference, many of the presentations and discussions were to do with problems such as plagiarism, fraud, and scientific misconduct. Without being in the least complacent, I reflected on how infrequently these topics have reared their heads at the *BJGP* and how enjoyable and rewarding it has been to deal with all the authors, reviewers, and correspondents who contribute to making the *BJGP* what it is, and at present it is the second most highly-cited general primary care journal in the world with a rising Impact Factor, against a trend of falling Impact Factors among many primary care and general medical journals.

However, Impact Factors are not the stuff of the general practice consultation, nor are primary care research papers always the stuff of continuing professional development, appraisal, and revalidation. Recognising this, we are giving serious thought to further, radical changes in the Journal which we think will benefit both the academic research community and also the large numbers of members and fellows of the RCGP who receive the journal every month, and who want more information of direct relevance to clinical practice and to the things that confront GPs and their teams on a day-to-day basis.

In order to achieve this, one potential route is to develop the 'research *BJGP*' as an online-only research journal, with continuous online publication, increasing open access, and monthly or bimonthly collections in which the research papers and accompanying editorials are brought together as an issue, along with material

from the print version of the *BJGP*, which will still be sent by post to College fellows, members, and other subscribers. This version, we envisage, will contain very short summaries of research papers, with electronic links to them, the same high quality editorials and Debate & Analysis articles as at present, with a considerably expanded section relevant to clinical practice, CPD, and revalidation. We will also provide information about developments in College policy and publications, encourage participation in consultations, and provide a generally more relevant and practical link between the College and the membership. And of course, we will continue to publish provocative, entertaining, reflective and idiosyncratic material in the Out of Hours pages.

At present the *BJGP* is going well: it is highly regarded in academic circles and many members and fellows are extremely positive about what we're trying to do. We also have a very substantial international readership. A large number of *BJGP* papers are written or reviewed by colleagues in many countries outside the UK, and we must ensure that we continue to meet and respond to their needs too. The RCGP values the international dimensions of general practice and primary care, and the *BJGP* needs to be at the centre of these discussions.

So, if you would like to comment on the ideas that I have outlined, or just want to tell us what you think your journal should look like in the future, this is your opportunity to do so by emailing us at journal@rcgp.org.uk. We want to make progress with this, so we will need to hear from you within the next 4 weeks in order to take your comments on board, and we look forward very much to doing so.

Roger Jones
Editor

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