

# Editor's Briefing

## RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

In order to deliver the best quality of care to patients, there is a need to constantly build and refresh the evidence base for practice. This has to be done not only by conducting high-quality research in general practice and primary care, but also by ensuring that the results of this research find their way into practice as quickly and as comprehensively as possible. However, effective translation of research into practice has always been an elusive goal. James Lancaster demonstrated that lemon juice prevented scurvy early in the 17th century, but it was not until James Lind's work almost 150 years later that lemons and limes were given to merchant seamen as antiscorbutics.

Modern medicine is littered with examples of persisting, ineffective practices and failures to implement evidence-based care. A wide variety of mechanisms to achieve the implementation of research in practice has been tried over the last decades, ranging from consensus building and educational interventions, to evidence-based guidelines and pay-for-performance arrangements. Recognising that individual studies seldom tell the whole story, much evidence-based practice rests on the results of systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which feed into clinical practice guidelines.

The role of medical publishing and academic journals in this scenario is complex. Journals provide a physical repository for research articles for future citation and reference, and disseminate them through paper and digital publication. Open access publication, where the research is made available to readers without payment, and where the costs of publishing are borne by the funders of research, has been introduced to expedite these processes. Expert external peer review is employed to try to maximise quality and minimise bias and error. Journal websites, social media, and targeted email and web communications are increasingly used to draw attention to articles and to promote their uptake by other media, as well as by clinicians and researchers. The success of research dissemination has hitherto been measured largely by calculating a journal's Impact Factor, which is a measure of the frequency of citation of research studies in other journals. This, in reality, says little

about the real 'impact' of research. The Higher Education Councils' Research Evaluation Framework now allocates a significant chunk of university funding on the basis of research impact narratives. There has been a growth in interest in so-called 'alternative metrics', such as Altmetric.com, which capture 'attention' as well as uptake of published research in the non-research literature, and may, with increasing sophistication, provide a more valid measure of true impact.

The *BJGP*'s tag line is 'Bringing research to clinical practice'. Ever since the College of General Practitioners' Research Newsletter was circulated as a cyclostyled paper document to a small number of interested researchers in the 1950s, the publication of high-quality original research has been at the heart of the Journal. We are acutely aware of the need not only to make this research relevant to practising GPs, but to devise ways of making it more accessible. We, like other journals, make extensive use of social media and of our website to do this, and several years ago embarked on a paper short:web long publication strategy, with the full research article published online and a two-page summary in the paper journal.

In this month's *BJGP* we have moved to a single page summary of each research study based on the abstract supplied by the authors, and supplemented by summary comments and images to highlight key findings. We hope that these summaries will be attractive and informative, catching readers' attention and encouraging them to follow through to the full-length article on the *BJGP* website ([bjgp.org](http://bjgp.org)). We want to help GPs to make the best possible decisions for their patients, and hope that this new approach to publishing research summaries will contribute to that. Your comments will, of course, be most welcome.

Roger Jones,  
Editor

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