ARCHIVES OF DISEASE IN CHILDHOOD

Malcolm Chiswick leaves *Archives*

Malcolm Chiswick is stepping down, having been an editor of *ADC* for nearly 13 years. Before that he was the journal's first associate editor, having been recruited to use his expertise to strengthen the journal's neonatal content. So impressively did he strengthen it that the amount of high quality newborn research submitted eventually threatened to swamp publication of papers from other disciplines. Consequently the *Fetal and Neonatal* edition was born, initially published quarterly and now bimonthly.

Thankfully, Malcolm is a genuine paediatric dinosaur, in that he retains a general paediatric as well as a neonatal caseload and research interests, and broadness of approach which is a great gift for an editor. Whether anyone of a younger generation can do the same is doubtful, provoking much pencil chewing by his successor.

His second great achievement was to make sure *ADC* became, and remains, an internationally acknowledged high quality scientific journal, rather than a parish magazine for British paediatrics and child health. At our biweekly meetings and almost nightly telephone conversations I have grown used to his most frequently expressed *cri de coeur*: "What would the Americans think if we published this paper?"

In fact the Americans think a lot of *ADC* despite the enormous barrier facing all European journals across the Atlantic. A paper published last year in *Pediatrics*¹ concluded that *ADC* was among the world's top 10 journals for paediatricians to find best evidence for clinical practice. Only two other non-US journals were in the top 10—the *BMJ* and *Lancet*. This accolade results directly from Malcolm's insistence on replacing, so far as possible, observational studies and consensus statements by hypothesis driven investigation. Part of this was an insistence on thorough statistical analysis at all times. Malcolm will readily admit his enormous debt to Professor Michael Healy, our indefatigable statistician, who patiently instructs innumerate editors.

The process of producing a scientific journal has changed enormously over the past 13 years. What was once an endless paperchase, conducted through file card indexes and carried out with bundles of papers balanced on laps in BMA House's smaller cupboards, now benefits from computerised tracking of papers, email, and fax contact with authors and associate editors, and biweekly meetings around a library table.

1999 has seen the successful launch of *eADC* [www.archdischild.com], with more hits in a week than hard copies sold in six months. Soon we hope to introduce fully electronic processing of papers between authors, editors, and reviewers.

Thirteen years ago, what went on in the scientific press was the property of the scientific community. Now the national and

international media watch us like hawks. In tune with BMJ Publishing Group policy, Malcolm introduced press releases of papers of public interest. Some of our readers are distressed by the results but we act on the basis that if we do not guide the press they will guide themselves up blind alleys. Malcolm reached his apogee when Jeremy Paxman on BBC's *Newsnight* held up a copy of the journal between finger and thumb and announced that the latest scandal had been brought to light by "something called *Archives of Disease in Childhood*".

Many readers assume editors do little more than divide papers into sheep and goats at the behest of reviewers. Nothing could be further from the truth. Just as clinical practice has become more specialised so editing is now beset by what

some call "journalology". Malcolm has found himself in the generation of editors who have to agonise about the reliability of peer review, the increasing problem of scientific fraud (from which *ADC* is not immune), ethical issues which cause us to reject papers despite local ethics committees having permitted the research, and whether an author might have a conflict of interest. We are also expected, like clinicians, to be financially aware so that *ADC*'s profitability does not suffer.

Malcolm tells me he retires from *ADC* pleased that it has been at the cutting edge of paediatrics and child health. He believes this achievement was possible because of the excellent infrastructure of BMJ Publishing Group, which gives the editors regular and instant access to experts in publishing, marketing, and finance.

His contribution to the health of the journal has been massive. I speak for the joint proprietors—the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and BMJ Publishing Group—the editorial board, staff, readers, and (most) authors in wishing him well with his future plans.

HARVEY MARCOVITCH
Editor

1 Birken CS, Parkin PC. In which journal will pediatricians find the best evidence for clinical practice? *Pediatrics* 1999;103:941–7.