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It is fashionable to criticise peer review and the system used by most scientific journals for sending manuscripts to be assessed by expert referees. Those who criticise should be asked to provide a realistic alternative. The advance of medicine and science means that no editor or editorial committee alone can provide the detailed assessment that submitted papers deserve. Moreover, the steady increase in the number of papers submitted means that a successful international journal such as ours could not cope with the amount of work without the generous help of others.

Sometimes the system may seem unfair and sometimes mistakes occur. But, every complaint we receive can be counterbalanced by a larger number of appreciative comments about referees' reports, not only from authors who have had papers accepted, but from those who have had a rejection letter accompanied by constructive advice. We are proud of all the referees, from several different countries, who in 1984 helped to make the *Archives* a better journal. On behalf of our readers, our authors, and particularly ourselves, we thank them.

ROY MEADOW AND BERNARD VALMAN

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