SISTER JOURNALS—UNITED STATES

American Journal of Diseases of Children

Robert Boyd had, to my mind, an easier reviewing task a few months ago as with no knowledge of Cyrillic script most of *Pediatriia* was incomprehensible to him. My smattering of Cyrillic is not required to review the *American Journal of Diseases of Children* (September 1990), so I am left deciding whether I am expected to comment on the journal or the individual articles therein: the wood or the trees?

Perhaps I should 'come clean' and admit that I am greatly influenced by the superficial appearance of things. I buy gramophone records for the attraction of the sleeves as much as for the quality of the recordings. For appearance this journal does not score highly. Despite being a publication of the American Medical Association, it lacks the artistic outside covers of its sister journal, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Inside it has similar problems. The relative merits of journal format can trigger involved arguments in editorial board meetings. Should a journal move to A4 size? Should there be one or two columns of print per page? These items are thought important in the battles to attract readers. *The American Journal of Diseases of Children* has three columns of very small print with about six words a line. Reading is tiresome as roughly every fourth line ends in a hyphenated word. The print is densely packed on the page with little break for illustrations or diagrams. The tables, on blue backgrounds surrounded by hard black lines, seem neither particularly easy to read nor attractive.*

But what of the science? The range of articles is wide and the topics covered significant: management of cardiovascular disease risk factors by primary care physicians; treatment of type 2a hyperlipidaemia in childhood (diet and fibre supplement); social and medical problems in children of heroin addicted parents (the problems you might expect with 37% unemployment, 16% prostitution, and 19% imprisonment

among the parents). There are also articles on lawn dart injuries (read the journal to find out what a lawn dart is); an impressive update review of immunodeficiency diseases; assessment of growth hormone release by cycle exercise; ribovirin treatment guidelines; zinc metabolism in infant rhesus monkeys (with interesting addenda on compliance with the Animal Welfare Act and indicating approval by campus veterinarians—perhaps something we should stress more in Britain); a section on sports medicine; and bronchiolitis in south India. A jolly good read for the 'office paediatrician'.

Listing the articles tells us something about the journal. Among the 19 articles, three are from outside the USA: from Canada, Spain, and India. The USA is large and does not need other countries to provide material for her journals. Publication from abroad does, however, suggest an international readership rushing to publish, or waiting to read, the latest discoveries in the journal. The *American Journal of Diseases of Children* does not give the impression of having that kind of readership. Earth shattering discoveries are published elsewhere. Scanning the references listed in these 19 articles showed about 48 references to general paediatric journals, most of which were American publications. There were 10 references to the *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, yet only nine to the *American Journal of Diseases of Children* itself. Does this prove my point?

There is pleasure in self assessment with the 'case of the month' and the 'radiological case of the month'. Incorrect guesses with the latter can always be blamed on the difficulties of reproducing x rays in print! Letters and short items in overseas journals reveal particular national habits in an entertaining light. Is Nintendo incontinence a problem in your clinics? If so, have you tried recommending use of the 'pause' button on the video cassette recorder? Sometimes I feel very old and out of date!

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*The Americans must have felt as I did. In January 1991 the journal changed to a logo style title on the front cover and a predominantly two columns per page style internally.