Editorial

British Heart Journal: content . . .

Readers will already have noticed the altered format of the *British Heart Journal*, with larger pages (A4 size) and subtle redesign of the front cover and page structure. These are forward looking ideas, which are discussed in more detail in the companion editorial below. Rest assured that, despite the change in packaging, the quality of the ingredients and the flavour of the *British Heart Journal* remain the same. The journal will continue to publish editorials, original studies, and case reports—chosen by peer review and by final discussion in the editorial office. There will be no short measure: the journal will continue to publish the same amount of text.

Steps to improve the quality of the content continue. The journal was an early partner in the change to the Vancouver style, which standardised several elements, especially references.¹ In 1988 the *British Heart Journal* published guidelines to promote the use of appropriate statistical design and analysis—emphasising the usefulness of confidence intervals.² In harmony with companion journals published by the *British Medical Journal* group, several other developments are being implemented.

Our preference for literate abstracts continues. We aim to entice the reader to study the full article and not to rely on a few isolated numbers within the abstract, which may be misleading. The use of confidence intervals may partly overcome this. More specifically, for clinical trials, we aim to publish structured abstracts provided by the authors as part and parcel of the article. The structured abstract has been well defined by Lock, and when appropriate should be used to indicate the objective, design, setting, participants, interventions, measurements and results, and key conclusions.³

Readers should already have noted an improvement in

the reproduction of black and white and colour illustrations. We are making greater use of computerised scanning techniques to prevent the degradation of what might sometimes be fairly faint images in the original.

Like other major journals, the *British Heart Journal* wants to publish the full story and not instalments. "Salami" publication, in which different elements of the same study are scattered in different places, clogs the journals, and prevents the reader from getting a comprehensive view of a subject in a single article.⁴ The equally disparaging term "meat extender" is applied to those articles where a little bit extra—usually a few cases—is added to an earlier report. It is often not clear which cases have been reported before and the body of knowledge is distorted by both approaches.

The *British Heart Journal* wants the developments reported on its pages to be seen first by the readers, and not disseminated by pre-emptive publication in the lay press, through extracts published in commercially orientated articles, or the like.

And what of new content? There will be more reviews of books chosen because they are unlikely to have received attention in the weekly medical press and because they are of specific cardiological interest and have that extra flavour which appeals to our readers. Also the journal has assembled a series of historical photographs from various sources, including the collections of the late John Hay of Liverpool and of Sir Thomas Lewis; these will appear with legends to remind us of the past and how and who thought things out.

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. . . and style

In 1989 the *British Heart Journal* celebrated its first 50 years. This milestone and the start of a fresh decade make it a good time for the journal to appear in a new suit—one that is larger and allows for a more flexible layout and better presentation of tables and illustrations.

The cover

The journal has never been a slave to fashion. The original familiar crimson jacket that it wore for almost a third of a century was shed only in 1970. As the editor, Kenneth Shirley Smith, wrote at the time, the "stylish modern" glossy white front cover with maroon border around the contents was designed "with the priority of instant recognition and immediate presentation of contents" firmly in mind.⁵ The minutes of the Editorial Committee meeting held in 1969 to discuss plans for the redesign

hopefully record that "A 'new look' cover would also encourage more of the younger cardiologists to send their papers to the *British Heart Journal*; at present its rather staid appearance perhaps discourages the younger research workers". The impact of the 1970 cover on the Young Turks of cardiology is difficult to judge but there is no doubt it did establish a brand image, which the journal was keen to retain with the new larger 1990 format. The new design retains the familiar glossy white cover with a maroon frame for the list of contents; this should ensure that the *British Heart Journal* continues to be instantly recognisable.

Layout

The 1970 design for the typography and page layout served the journal well. But inevitably the purity of the original

design was corrupted by the month to month expediencies of accommodating changing contents and a considerable growth in the number of figures and tables. The format was serviceable but dated and the *British Heart Journal* was beginning to look its age, with a profile somewhat blurred in middle age.

These aesthetic considerations alone would soon have prompted a review of the journal's design. But for most of the specialist journals published by the *BMJ* group there were also economic and practical gains to be made out of changing to a larger page. The move to a larger standard metric paper—A4—will lead to economies in production for all nine journals in the *BMJ* stable that are abandoning crown quarto paper, which is now a non-standard size and hence expensive.

The change to a larger page gave the ideal opportunity of bringing a fresh eye—that of Ray Fishwick—to the variegated styles of all the special journals in the *BMJ* stable. Up till now most of the special journals have followed their own inclinations and this has meant that the compositors at the printers have had to know about and recall the time consuming typographical idiosyncrasies of all the *BMJ* journals that they set. Now, production will be streamlined by the unified design.

In formulating a basic design for the group the designer was careful to consult with each of the journals before settling for an approach that can cope with their individual requirements and presents an up to date corporate image for the whole stable.

But for readers and authors the main advantage of the new five column design lies in its greater flexibility for presenting tables and illustrations. A redesign is as unsettling as having decorators in—but once the smell of paint has gone, readers and authors should feel as comfortable in their new more spacious surroundings as they were in the old ones.

JANE DAWSON

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- 1 International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals. *Br Med J* 1982;284:1766–70.
- 2 Evans SJW, Mills P, Dawson J. The end of the p value? *Br Heart J* 1988;60:177–80.
- 3 Lock S. Structured abstracts. *Br Med J* 1988;297:156.
- 4 Lock S. Publication: duplicate, salami, meat extender—all redundant. *Br Med J* 1989;298:1203–4.
- 5 Smith KS. The *British Heart Journal* Redesigned. *Br Heart J* 1970;32:1.