

*Editorial*

## QED: Quality, Education, and Dialogue

With my second year as Editor now well underway, it is perhaps timely to review the current status of the journal, recent changes, and the future plans we have for *Heart*.

**Quality**

Although we have increased the rejection rate of the journal to over 80%, the number of papers submitted has not decreased (currently well in excess of 1000 manuscripts a year). Hopefully the more stringent application of scientific criteria has led to an improvement in the standard of the original scientific papers accepted. I believe strongly that it is better to have a lean fit journal than a fat flabby one.

A major factor affecting the popularity of a journal with the submitting authors is the quality and speed of the review process. This remains one of the most difficult areas for us to control. Whereas delays occurring within the editorial office (regarding allocation of papers and responding to authors once reviewers' comments have been received) have been minimised, the process of obtaining a reviewer's comments is still the main delaying factor. Because we choose the most able people within the field to review the papers, we are also selecting the busiest. This produces an impossible conflict. One way around the problem that we have found useful is to use a significant proportion of young but authoritative reviewers, who often have slightly more time available than do those in the middle of their careers.

We may be able to cut the time for review a little further by more liberal use of email and the internet. In addition, the introduction of a web-based submission and review system scheduled for later in 2001 should produce further improvement in the process. We are constantly auditing our performance to improve the time to the first decision.

**Education**

The journal now has a thinner, but hopefully higher quality, scientific section and the number of basic science contributions is increasing. The editorial policy is to complement the original papers with a very strong educational content. This takes several forms. "Education in Heart" has been well received and the first year's contributions are being produced as a book, which will be available in March 2001. "Education in Heart" was planned initially to have a three year cycle. I am pleased to say that our joint owners, BMJ Publishing Group and the British Cardiac Society, have agreed to continue funding the project beyond this time, and we have plans to develop the programme further. The present didactic format will con-

tinue, since I believe there is a place for some old fashioned didacticism, but there will also be an interactive education section on the web. This will be based on clinical cases and relate to the articles appearing at the same time.

The educational aspect of the journal is further promoted by the editorials and reviews. Although we try to link these with original articles, it is sometimes very difficult. Nevertheless, we will continue to ensure topical issues of broad interest to readers are addressed in this section of the journal. We are very happy to receive unsolicited editorials and reviews, although these are subjected to a thorough peer review and may be rejected. Even commissioned editorials are occasionally rejected if they fail to come up to standard.

**Dialogue**

A monthly journal has difficulty in carrying current comment. Before the advent of the electronic journal it was almost impossible, but now much more can be done. We are working on the design of the journal's website so that in the near future we will be able to post material on the site as it comes in, rather than having to link it to an article within the print journal (which is the present situation). Currently we can do this only with the rapid responses. These can be posted immediately, although usually they are held for a few days to allow the author of the original article to reply, if it seems that it would make the rapid response more interesting. Very soon we will have the same capacity for "Viewpoints" and responses to "Viewpoints". These can be posted immediately and those of particular interest can later be published in the printed journal. I hope that this arrangement will allow dialogue to develop over important aspects of cardiology. The only editorial sanction in this area will be the elimination of any material that is libelous, indecent, and, above all, tedious.

In my last editorial a year ago I asked for comments about the journal and suggestions for improvement. The response was a perfect zero. I sincerely hope that with the changes we have planned for 2001 and beyond, all parties involved with the journal—authors, reviewers, and readers—will feel inclined to participate further in the development of *Heart* by letting us have their views.

ROGER HALL  
*Editor*

**QED**

*Quad Erat Demonstrandum (what was to be demonstrated)  
or Quite Easily Done (schoolboy translation)*