

## EDITORIAL

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It was kind of Dr. Pasricha to 'ask' me to 'write a few lines in this issue of the journal as the outgoing Editor. In a way I had officially bowed out when I presented my last report to the general body and the central council of the IADVL during its annual meeting at Aurangabad in January 1984.

The editorship of the IJDVL was officially handed to Dr. C. Bhakthaviziam, my teacher and predecessor at the Christian Medical College, Vellore in 1972. As the assistant editor with him then, and later as the editor, it had been my privilege to serve the Association and work for the journal for the past 12 years.

I was well aware of the fact that I was taking on a stupendous task but had not realised how challenging and educative an exercise it was going to be.

When the files and accounts were first received in our office, there was little money to spend and much material for potential publication. There was a large back-log of articles that needed reviewing.

The success of a journal is sometimes judged on the growth of its readership but the status of a journal has to be judged by the quality of its content. The editor is not responsible for what the authors write but she/he is the custodian of standards. What the editor decides to publish or otherwise has a significant effect on the product.

In this country we are good readers and keen writers. However our keenness in writing does not match up with an effort to materialise a product of perfection. I dare to make this allegation on ourselves because of my experience with the journal work of the past decade.

Many of the articles present data which are scientifically unsound. There is no respect for accuracy and precision. Statistical analysis and control studies seem alien to our work. There is much abuse of the English language.

Scientifically sound articles may not be easy reading. Perhaps statistics was not taught to many of us in schools or colleges. We have the disadvantage of having to express our thoughts in a language that is foreign to us. These however are not to be used to excuse ourselves from good writing. Even though an Editor respects the work done by the author, the interest of the reader has to be guarded.

An Editor's office carries considerable privilege and power. Even while certain amount of editorial freedom has to be exercised, the privilege and power are not to be misused. During my tenure of office there are some who have criticised the severe stand taken by the Editor and the editorial

advisory board in turning down papers submitted for publication. The intention was only to uphold a certain standard.

Many of those who read these columns are contributors to this journal or others today or in the tomorrows. Therefore through these pages I would like to crusade for good writing, good in every way—scientific soundness, organised data, clear presentation, precision, correct use of language and all other things which make an article useful reading. Let us ask the questions Why? What? and How? Let us get an honest answer to these questions before we proceed to write.

I hand over the responsibilities of the Editorial office with the traditional mixed feelings. Medical editing is an unusual job and very time-consuming. There are tasks I would like to begin for which I could not spare time before.

I realise however that I have much to lose. I had learned much in the last 12 years which I would never have learned except through holding my office. It had been a great experience working with my colleagues and especially those who shouldered the responsibilities with me as editorial staff.

I owe much to the staff of my department in Vellore. It may sound unbelievable when I say that many many extra hours of work were put in by all my staff to ensure the smooth running of the journal work and no remuneration was ever received by them. They did a fantastic job and I can only show my gratitude by recording my thanks to them on your behalf and mine.

**Rachel Mathai**