

How do I look?

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The journal sports a new cover beginning with this issue. We hope you like our new look. We also hope you will find more to like in the journal.

The question of how one should judge a journal is a difficult one. Some measures have been proposed. The best known of these may be the impact factor. This is a measure of how frequently articles from a journal are quoted by other workers. The assumption is that the larger the number of times articles are cited, the more valuable the published work is and by extension, the better the journal in which this work is published. Acceptance rates (or its converse, rejection rates) are also used to assess the value of a journal. A journal that accepts only a small proportion of submitted articles is assumed to be a good journal that has high standards. The number of subscribers to a journal may indicate its worth with a larger number of people being willing to pay to read a better journal. The number of advertisers a journal attracts is another measure of its worth though this is more commonly used in assessing or comparing general interest periodicals rather than medical journals. The production qualities of a journal including paper, printing, color images, and language editing also influence the way it is perceived. There are some quite obvious shortcomings of each of these measures. Less obviously, there are ways of

manipulating them so that a journal appears better than it is. But taken together, they do give us a rough idea of the quality of a journal. We think our journal does reasonably well on all these measures, a legacy of the hard work of editorial teams that have managed the journal in the past. We hope we can continue to maintain standards and will strive to improve them.

Apart from the cover, the journal has made a few other changes while some more are planned. The Images in Clinical Practice section has been re-worked. Please see our new author instructions for these submissions. The focus is on the image supported with a minimum of text. Our specialty lends itself to illustration and we have been impressed by the quality of images we now see at meetings and in articles. We hope we can feature striking, high quality images that tell their story without requiring too many words. Snippets from Acad_IADVL is a new feature in the print version of the journal that provides snapshots of the discussions that roil the internet on our association's academic e-discussion group. We hope you will get a flavor of what goes on, and that this will make you want to taste more and that you will consider joining the group and contributing to it. You don't know what you are missing if you are not a member. Commentaries, editorials, viewpoints, opinions, and perspectives will appear more often in our pages. We hope these short essays will provide perspective on the reports we publish. While many of these will be invited pieces based on the articles submitted for publication, we welcome contributions. If you have something to say or an opinion to express that you think will be of interest to the readers of the journal, please send us your manuscript. Of course, like all other submissions, these will be reviewed before publication.

Several members have joined the editorial team but we have space and need for more. From the time a manuscript is submitted to the time it is published, it goes through several stages. These include rapid, initial evaluation of manuscripts, identification of

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referees, review of articles, assessment of the revisions carried out by authors, decision-making regarding suitability for publication, language editing, and proofreading, among others. Each of these stages requires a conscious effort by one or more people with knowledge, expertise, and stamina. These are not tasks that can be automated or delegated to non-medical editorial staff. Of these, there are two areas where our needs are presently more pressing than in others.

Experts are key to the peer review process and we have an unappeasable, constant hunger for them. We need the assistance of people who will assess a paper and tell authors and the editorial team what to do with the manuscript. Who can be a reviewer? What do we expect from them? A degree of knowledge of the subject of the article and/or a willingness to learn more about it are required to make a fair assessment of the manuscript. Importantly, an ability to articulate one's thoughts and express them clearly and politely is a helpful attribute. Sometimes, when we read a manuscript, we may quickly know whether it is really good or that is quite bad. In such cases, as well as others where the decision may not be obvious, an effort is required to articulate our thoughts and to indicate what it is that is good or bad about the paper. Both for the author and editor, it is helpful to know how the decision was reached. A summary judgment delivered in a single sentence does not quite qualify for a review.

Obviously, we cannot expect reviewers to undertake this task with sufficient care if we overburden them. We have decided not to send reviewers more than one article a month so that there is adequate time to think about the manuscript and study the subject, if required before providing an opinion. In the rare situation where expertise in a subject is limited to a

small number of people and more than one article on the topic has been submitted around the same time, we will seek the referee's permission before sending him the second article. We recognize that reviewing is undertaken in addition to clinical and several other responsibilities at work and home; we can adjust the frequency and type of manuscripts sent to suit your schedule.

Currently, our greatest need is for people who will help to improve the language and presentation of manuscripts. In working with manuscripts over the last few months, we have identified this as an area where we require assistance. Some authors submit scientifically sound manuscripts that reviewers deem suitable for publication. However, in spite of several iterations, they are unable to improve language, grammar, and readability beyond a certain point. Apart from correcting obvious errors, we are also looking for help with improving presentation. So if you are someone with a feel for language and are willing to work with other people's manuscripts, please contact us. You can be as radical in your repairs as you wish: we always check with authors to ensure that we have not mangled their data or their message while making revisions for language. Though often, a lighter touch will suffice to make the article read better.

I began by counting the ways we could evaluate a journal. In addition to all other measures of a journal's value, we think, like the kingdom of Bhutan, that happiness is important too. How happy you are with the journal matters greatly to us. We need to know how we are doing. Are we the journal you want us to be? What do we need to do more of, what less, what different? Please tell us. Email, fax, text, snail mail, call, or talk to us. We will listen.