

## Correspondence

### Scientific communication centres: few in number, narrow in specialty

Science editors and educators of scientific writing provide support in a variety of ways to researchers writing for publication. Much of this support is provided outside the formal structure of institutions. Within institutions, “scientific communication centres” are rare. The operational details and benefits of one such centre were explained in an essay in the previous issue of *European Science Editing*<sup>1</sup> and in two related publications.<sup>2,3</sup> Perhaps the most important benefit of such a centre is that the institution’s authors can be sure of receiving consultation that is personalised and of high quality, because the centre shares the research mission of the institution.

Some of the presentations at the recent conference of the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) in Tallinn, Estonia were on a related topic – how editors can help researchers with writing and publishing.<sup>4</sup> At the conference Carol Norris explained how she teaches science writing in Helsinki by having students edit each other’s work, and Ed Hull from the Netherlands spoke about the three-step interactive editing approach, in which the language editing happens after the author has revised the paper by acting upon feedback on the flow and content. Training by editing can be coordinated by scientific communication centres, and researchers across departments may benefit as a result.

Unfortunately, these centres are few, and even when one is found, chances are it is within the premises of a medical institution. There are, of course, numerous research institutions that focus on many areas of science, and their research agendas and publication ambitions are similar to those of medical institutions. Why, then, are communication centres not common in research institutions? Budgetary constraints, no doubt, are a reason, but perhaps science editors should do more to convince administrators and researchers of the benefits. Editors at scientific communication centres can help authors by offering editorial services and training early-career researchers to draft “rough gems” of papers that need only language polishing to become publication-worthy.

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- 2 Breugelmans R, Barron JP. The role of in-house medical communications centers in medical institutions in nonnative English-speaking countries. *Chest* 2008;134(4):883–885. doi: 10.1378/chest.08-1068
- 3 Lang TA. Assessing the productivity and value of a hospital-based editing service. *AMWA Journal* 1997;12(1):6–14.
- 4 <http://www.ease.org.uk/ease-events/triennial-conference/editing-digital-world-tallinn/tallinn-programme/parallel-session-f> [accessed 18 June 2012]

### The exemplary case of editing and indexing *Biochemia Medica*

Having published an article a couple of years ago in *Biochemia Medica*, I was pleased to read Ana-Maria Simundic’s paper.<sup>1</sup> I was impressed by the fact that the editorial staff of this journal has had no formal training on science editing and that they work on a voluntary basis (unpaid). Although journal editors of major publishers (eg Nature Publishing Group) tend to be salaried and a few medical journal editors can make upwards of \$100,000 per year,<sup>2</sup> I have to wonder how many of Dr Simundic’s peers who run journals from small scientific communities might also work on a voluntary basis and without much formal training.

I was also pleased by the relatively recent and rapid ascent of the journal in terms of major indexing organisations that now include *Biochemia Medica* in their listings. Surely, these accomplishments stem from expertly persistent editorial oversight regarding issues of scholarship and research integrity, such as authors’ declaration of conflicts of interest and authors’ contributorship. I was glad to learn of *Biochemia Medica*’s achievements. My sense is that the editor has every reason to be proud of her journal and, in spite of the competing climate in science publishing, I have no doubts that *Biochemia Medica* will continue to rise in stature and respectability. I believe that the scientific community owes the editors of *Biochemia Medica* a debt of gratitude for their tireless efforts on behalf of good science.

**Competing interests** I published an article in *Biochemia Medica* and was reader of the doctoral dissertation for Dr Lidija Bilić-Zulle, an assistant editor of the journal.

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- 2 Gutpa, A, Henrichs, K. AAMSE Publishing Survey (September, 2009). Henrichs and Associates, Evanston, Illinois, US, <http://www.publishingresearch.net/documents/AAMSEPublishingSurveyFinalReport.pdf> [accessed 16 June 2012].

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