

## Editorial

### Combining science editors' and clinicians' efforts to advance writing and editing skills

Science writing and editing is evolving as a unique scientific discipline, and there are currently a few positive examples of how teaching research methodology and reporting at the undergraduate level can improve prospects of future researchers' performance.<sup>1</sup> Skilled journal editors, particularly those from the small professional communities, are in a position to share experience with contributors to their journals by arranging small-group discussions and publishing guidelines on study design, literature search strategy, structuring manuscripts, avoiding common writing mistakes, and surviving the peer-review.<sup>1,2</sup> Editors are also responsible for adopting good editorial practice standards and monitoring adherence of authors to the guidelines and policy papers published by science editors' organisations such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Council of Science Editors (CSE) and the European Association of Science Editors (EASE).<sup>3</sup> Resources of these and other leading learned societies represent valuable tools for advancing knowledge and skills of all the contributors to science writing and editing, namely authors, peer-reviewers, editors, and publishers.

Familiarity with traditional and new international and regional editorial societies and their activities may substantially improve the quality of publications and their visibility. EASE and its members pay attention to this task and frequently reflect on the achievements of the learned societies on the pages of *European Science Editing*,<sup>4,5</sup> one of the leading scientific periodicals in the field of science communication. The journal serves as a forum supporting editors from Europe and many other parts of the world in their attempts to meet the standards of selective indexing databases.<sup>6</sup> A variety of high-rank meetings of scientific and technical editors are regularly discussed in the journal, thus providing guidance for novice and senior fellows in science editing. This issue also contains reports of interest to editors struggling to advance their editors' skills and educate them.<sup>7,8</sup>

Like many organisations aiming to expand the network of editors, EASE periodically arranges congresses, where many hot topics are discussed and numerous problems find their solutions. The next triennial congress of EASE, which will be held on 8–10 June 2012 in Tallinn, Estonia, is going to become a major meeting point for editors from around the world concerned with the digitalization of their journals and improving authors' writing skills. It is expected to gather specialists from different backgrounds and stimulate dialogue between authors, peer reviewers, editors, and publishers. Based on its highly educational programme, the congress will be attractive for many editors from the scientific periphery and countries seeking better editorial practices.

As an editor, I have recently had the opportunity to

attend several workshops on editing and biomedical congresses, where the basics of writing, editing, and peer-reviewing were on top of the agenda. Interestingly, the important trend in arranging meetings for biomedical specialists, at least based on personal experience, is to incorporate topics on writing in the programmes of highly specialised biomedical meetings. The rationale for this trend stems from the importance of writing skills for every discipline and for biomedicine in particular. In fact, the European League Against Rheumatism (EULAR) annual rheumatology congress, held on 25–28 May 2011 in London and which I had a privilege to attend, was a remarkable event in that it arranged a special session on composing articles, submitting them to the most suitable journals, and peer-review in rheumatology journals. The session was well attended by junior clinicians, researchers, and editors of the leading journals in the field of rheumatology. It included presentations by editors of *Arthritis and Rheumatism* (Joan M. Bathon), *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* (Tore K. Kvien), and *Rheumatology* (Robert J. Moots). The presentations were not overburdened with too much specialised information and, in a simple and attractive way, addressed the principles of writing original articles, choosing a target journal, and satisfying the requirements of demanding reviewers. All the presenting editors unanimously agreed on the need to publish articles representing sufficiently high level of evidence, ie original papers, reports of large trials, and systematic reviews. The editors of the journals, with annual submission rates well above 1000, gave unsurprisingly low priority to clinical case reports, small and preliminary reports. The session was a unique opportunity to learn the presenter's attitude towards the editors' credentials, which ideally should encompass outstanding clinical experience, managerial, and editorial skills. Importantly, the famous 2-day course «How to be a successful journal editor», run by PSP consulting in Oxford, UK and elsewhere in Europe,<sup>9</sup> was mentioned by the chief editor of *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, Prof. Tore K. Kvien who attended it, as helpful for getting valuable skills and editing the most impacting journal in rheumatology.

Definitely, the successful example of the EULAR congress, incorporating an editors and authors meeting into the highly saturated clinical science programme, is not the only one. However, it once again emphasises the importance of paying more attention to the clinicians' scholarly writing and editing skills. Inspired by this example many clinical meetings worldwide have arranged similar sessions, and, hopefully, it will pave the way for a tradition.

Another remarkable feature of the EULAR 2011 congress was its international representation. I was particularly fortunate to meet many clinicians from developed and developing countries, editors of top- and middle-rank

journals in rheumatology, and to discuss the prospects for research and science editing in rheumatology. Despite his numerous commitments, presentations, meetings with specialists and shortage of time, Prof. Tore K. Kvien kindly responded to my request discuss editorial policy and workflow in *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*. He was very proud of having distinguished European and American rheumatologists in the editorial board of the journal. Members of the editorial board are selected to represent almost all branches of current rheumatology, common and rare rheumatic diseases; most editors are involved in large multicentre randomized trials and frequently submit reports on these trials to the journal. Importantly, the journal ascribes to the principles of publishing ethics and research reporting of the COPE and the EQUATOR Network.

The quality of journals, traditional and alternative impact factors were the main topics discussed at an informal meeting with the publishing editor at the Springer Verlag London Ltd, Dr Ross Hildrew, responsible for clinical journals such as *Rheumatology International*, *Osteoporosis International*, *Clinical Rheumatology*, *Calcified Tissue International*, etc. Dr Hildrew shared his thoughts on the possibilities of improving the impact of the middle-rank rheumatological journals by limiting the number of case reports. The restructuring of editorial boards, hiring of new editors, and the internationalisation were also considered as potentially helpful strategies.

The congress was an excellent opportunity to get visibility for middle- and low-rank rheumatological journals and magazines. *Clinical Rheumatology* and *Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology* had their well-attended, well-designed and informative booths standing next to the booths of top-rank rheumatological journals. Interestingly, there was also the booth of the *Turkish Journal of Rheumatology*, a relatively new journal indexed by Science Citation Index Expanded and listed in the Journal Citation Report. Representatives of the journal impressed with their Mediterranean hospitality; Turkish pastry sweetened the hospitality. The booth also displayed information on the Turkish national rheumatology congress, which many visitors would be tempted to attend.

In conclusion, the EULAR 2011 congress in London was a successful clinical and scientific meeting of interest to the global community of rheumatologists, internologists and science editors. It was a good example of how clinicians and science editors can cooperate and advance science communication.

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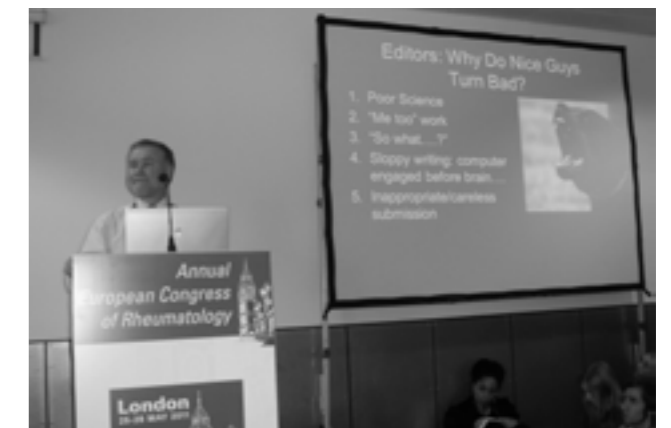
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**Editors of the leading journals in rheumatology at the EULAR 2011 session on science writing and peer review. From left to right: Stefano Bombardieri, David S. Pisetsky, Tore K. Kvien, Robert J. Moots, and Joan M. Bathon**



**Robert J. Moots presenting the peer review process in Rheumatology (Oxford)**