Editorial note

Indexing *Journal of Medical Genetics*

From 1994 there will be a change in the method of indexing the subjects of *Journal of Medical Genetics*. Papers will be indexed by a keyboard system, and authors of papers will be asked to choose up to three keywords, occasionally four, for each paper at manuscript stage, which will then contribute to the compilation of an annual index. A keyword is a word (or phrase) which will identify the subject matter of a written paper in an index. The index will be published, as usual, at the end of the December issue. The format will be different, with the title of the paper repeated after each keyword on every entry.

The author index will no longer include the title of the paper and will become a list of authors and page numbers only.

On the surface choosing index headings would not appear difficult but medicine, because of its synonyms, phrasal headings, proprietary and pharmaceutical names of drugs, syndromes, Latin words, and assorted lay terms, produces problems of its own.

An index should be consistent. It is not satisfactory if half the entries are under, for example, muscular dystrophy, Duchenne and the other half under Duchenne muscular dystrophy, and whereas it is reasonable to make some decisions about the entries that can be

anticipated authors will not know what other work is being published, or under what titles, in the same volume. Some modifications may therefore have to be made by the Technical Editor. The keyword will be chosen at the earliest stage of publication not at the latest as it is now, and as each article will be dealt with in isolation there will be no links between articles of like subject matter.

Authors are advised to scan papers for keywords that may not be in the title, to use British approved names rather than pharmaceutical names for drugs, and to avoid general terms such as clinical, complications, adverse effects, and patient. As the subject of the journal is 'Medical Genetics' it is better not to use Genetics as a heading, except in Genetic counselling and certain other occasions when the paper is very general.

This cannot be more than an attempt to guide authors and perhaps to warn of the pitfalls, but it is important to remember that if authors wish to have their work found easily in the index they should consider the keywords carefully.

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Indexer