Editorial

Editorial postscript: 10 years of change and evolution

This issue marks a change of editorship for *Journal of Medical Genetics*; from June 1995, Professor Martin Bobrow, currently Chairman of Medical Genetics and Professor of Paediatric Research at Guy's Hospital and the University of London, and shortly taking up the new Chair of Medical Genetics at Cambridge University, will be chief Editor of the Journal. The change also marks 10 years since I took up the position of editor, so perhaps an editorial postscript is in order. I do not propose to use this to assess the success of the Journal during this period; readers, authors, and the scientific and medical community in the field of medical genetics can provide a more accurate answer than can the Editor. However, it has certainly been an exciting 10 years, not just for myself, but for the Journal and for genetics in general.

At a practical level, the Journal has grown steadily from a small format, alternate monthly publication to an A4 monthly issue of over 1000 pages per year. A glance through back numbers shows how the main topics have evolved, with molecular genetics and gene mapping not only developing as a scientific field, but entering clinical practice, while dysmorphology, seen particularly through the well established "Syndrome of the month" series, has acquired a sound basis in developmental and molecular biology. Social scientists have joined their laboratory colleagues in the analysis of genetic diseases and of new genetic tests, reflecting the role of the Journal as representing all those involved in the field of medical genetics world wide, whether laboratory or clinically based, and covering both basic and applied research.

At a personal level, maintaining this "balancing act" between the different constituencies reading and writing for the Journal has been one of the most difficult but most satisfying tasks, one that would have been impossible without the skills of my fellow editors. Contact with colleagues around the world reinforces the view that it is this balanced role of the Journal, with both original papers and reviews in a wide range of fields, that is one of its strongest attractions.

Many people have asked me: how do I find time to edit the Journal and have I enjoyed it? To the second question I can unhesitatingly answer yes; the superb support from Clare Henderson as technical editor, and from others centrally, has meant that most of my time has been spent creatively rather than purely on administrative aspects. As to how I have found the time, this is rather less easy to answer, as indeed I find is the case for most of the other activities that I have been able to undertake. I have no magic formula to offer aspiring editors, but I can certainly recommend a flexibility of working arrangements and the ability to use all available fragments of time; readers will have probably been unaware that one issue of the Journal was largely put together in a field while (nominally) supervising my children picking potatoes, while another was edited in a crowded train between Shanghai and Canton, with a lively interest taken from what seemed to be a considerable portion of the local population. As evidence that editing a scientific journal is both possible and worthwhile, I can point with some pride to the number of members of the *Journal of Medical Genetics* editorial committee who have gone on to found their own successful specialist journals.

Perhaps the greatest pleasure and privilege which has come to me through editing the Journal has been the extensive contact and friendship with so many workers around the world that might well not have occurred otherwise. This has made me realise how fortunate we are in our field to have such a high degree of cooperation and interaction, much of it altruistic in nature. To have experienced this at a personal as well as a professional level through being Editor has indeed been a privilege, and if *Journal of Medical Genetics* has helped to promote and enhance this cooperative and international spirit, then any editorial toil and difficulty has been well worth while.

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