

Editorial

At the time of writing, the news is obsessed with talk of economic recession. John Maynard Keynes, who has been much quoted by British commentators during this crisis, once, in what was rather an uncharacteristic admission, wrote:

It will be those peoples who can keep alive, and cultivate into a fuller perfection, the art of life itself and do not sell themselves for the means of life, who will be able to enjoy the abundance when it comes.¹

Similar aphorisms have been advanced by others, but ‘the art of life itself’ is a phrase that clearly means everything and nothing. Many variables of living may be held to comprise part of the ‘art of life’ but, to the majority, the quality of life (if not its art) is inexorably linked to material comfort and hence to a stable economy.

The Journal of Laryngology & Otology has been in existence since 1887 and has therefore, self-evidently, survived previous economic fluctuations. We believe that our parent charity, JLO (1984) Limited, is well placed to endure beyond the current economic downturn for, under the capable stewardship of our Company Secretary, Mike Hellyar (and, it must be said, at his insistence), we had already carried out a review of our investment strategy earlier this year and prior to the sudden collapse of confidence that occurred in the autumn. This should leave us well able to ride out the current storm, and we would like to put on record our appreciation of all the additional hard work and careful and detailed planning that this review caused Mike during the year.

Of course, the charity primarily exists to disburse monies. Indeed, its founding principle is stated thus:

The principal object of the charity is to promote education in all branches of laryngology, otology and rhinology and in all allied sciences... in addition, the charity provides charitable grants to individuals to further their education in the fields of laryngology, otology and rhinology and makes grants to hospital trusts to fund research.

To that end, we have in the last year endowed two display cabinets for the Toynbee Mackenzie room at the Royal Society of Medicine in London. This room will be the preserve of the ENT sections of the society, and the cabinets, which have been designed by John Ronayne under the watchful eye of Neil Weir, will house a historic selection of instruments and other memorabilia from the Institute of Laryngology and Otology. These cabinets will be completed and installed by the end of this year, and we readily acknowledge the contribution of Professor Anthony Wright in facilitating this initiative on behalf of the

Institute, as well as the hard work that this has entailed for Neil and, we suspect, for his wife Sue.

We also support charitable giving in terms of fellowships to young surgeons, and we would wish to draw the reader’s attention to the JLO fellowships and ‘pump-priming’ grants advertised in this and other issues. Each year the *Journal* publicises these awards, and the response could perhaps best be described as muted and disappointing. We believe that this may be in part due to some misunderstanding. The awards are of course intended to be open to all readers of the *Journal* and not simply to subscribers in Britain – although we rarely receive any applications from beyond these shores. A notable exception was the successful application of Dr O Akinpelu, a consultant in Nigeria who, in 2007, applied for a fellowship and who was awarded money to travel to study at the Rochester Medical Center, New York. However, this application was unusual. We would like this tendency to change and would emphasise that there is no proscription on any application, beyond that the applicant is a subscriber to the *Journal* and that they have a proper itinerary and are supported by their own department to travel. Similarly, the pump-priming grant, which was conceived to facilitate the start of original laboratory or other research, is open to all subscribers. Therefore, we would urge that either you or your junior staff apply.

The *Journal* continues to receive a large number of manuscripts. In the last year, we have received 722 potential papers and have published 277, of which 191 were reviews or main articles; the remaining 86 were clinical records. The quality of the manuscripts received is improving, and this has allowed us to reflect our continued desire to rebalance the *Journal* towards publishing properly conducted clinical trials and evidence-based reviews. We have recently had to expand the page extent of a number of issues to accommodate a backlog of accepted papers, and we anticipate that such expansion will need to continue on a periodic basis. At the same time, the diversity of points of origin for articles has expanded somewhat, with a significant increase in the numbers of manuscripts now being received from South Africa and the United States as well as from Australia and New Zealand. We hope that this trend will continue, and we look forward to attending a meeting in Australia to promote the *Journal* next year, as well as attending the Indian Association meeting in Jaipur.

We would, once again, urge potential authors to read and observe the ‘Instructions to Authors’, which are updated periodically but which are ignored by many. This matter has been addressed

previously but needs reiteration. Any departure from the 'Instructions to Authors' may either delay a decision about an article or, increasingly, will result in your manuscript being returned to you before it is sent for review. This increases our editorial workload and, ultimately, adds considerably to production costs. In like manner, it is worth restating the need to avoid strangled syntax and the use of abbreviations. The latter has been the subject of previous editorial pleading, but their use continues. Abbreviations are a convenience for authors but often an aggravation for readers and could lead to uncertainty or erroneous interpretation of meaning. A recent editorial in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood*² discusses how the use of abbreviations might, in a wider sense, be reduced. For our part, we spend considerable time answering questions from our copy editors regarding the suitability. Unless they are universally recognised they are of course struck out, but this entails a considerable increase in the time spent on a manuscript – and thus does not endear you to the editorial team!

We remain very grateful to our Assistant Editors, some of whom receive a disproportionate number of manuscripts. We are conscious of this and are trying to rebalance this in the immediate future by making some new appointments as well as by asking some people to stand down. Particular thanks must be given to Liam Flood who, as Senior Assistant Editor and Book Review Editor, has shouldered much of the burden in this regard. Once again, we must also thank our Managing Editor, Rosamund Greensted, for her significant contribution to the continued success of the *Journal*. There must have been times when she

has been away on leave, but we can neither of us recall when exactly that was. She certainly displays a commitment that seems starkly at odds with the European Working Time Directive! Her industry and unfailing good humour has been a major and significant anchor for us and we could not have managed without her. In like manner, our collaboration with Cambridge University Press has continued to prosper and we thank Daniel Edwards, Susan Perkins and Sarah Sharpe for their continued industry on our behalf.

Finally, we thank you for continuing to support the *Journal*. We have seen an enhanced interest in the last year in terms of an increasing number of Letters to the Editor – a development that we feel reflects a real involvement in the published material. We cannot, of course, guarantee to publish all such letters, but welcome them as a sign of wider participation by the readership.

Finally, we wish you a happy festive season and a prosperous 2009, wherever you are and whatever your individual circumstances.

References

- 1 Keynes JM. Economic possibilities for our grandchildren. In: Keynes JM. *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes*. London: Macmillan, 1972 (originally published 1930)
- 2 Walsh KE, Gurwitz JH. Medical abbreviations: writing little and communicating less. *Arch Dis Child* 2008;**93**:816–17

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