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A passion for review

By Joe Bouch

FROM
THE EDITOR

The peer review process is essential to maintaining the high quality of *Advances*. A new reviewer recently asked me how long it should take her to review an article. I don't know the answer to this but I do know that our articles are almost always modified following review, sometimes substantially, and it is quite common for manuscripts to be resubmitted several times (six is the record while I have been editor). Whether or not H.G. Wells is right that 'no passion in the world is equal to the passion to alter someone else's draft', we are indebted to our reviewers, whose work is vital but largely unheralded.

How best to support learning is an essential consideration for *Advances*. Visual style is one aspect of this but so too are language, accuracy and balance. Language matters. 'Having the language, both verbal and syntactical, to describe complex experience may be a key component in developing the ability to survive mental tribulation' (Davis 2009). 'Having the language' is surely also important for us as clinicians in understanding, supporting and treating our patients. It is self-evident that ensuring accuracy is imperative for *Advances*. Here too language matters. We try to avoid flabbiness in our articles, aiming for text that is concise, lucid and unambiguous. Staff editors copy-edit each article, focusing as much on the clarity and accuracy of the text as on checking that references are correct, up-to-date and relevant. And lastly balance. We think that the evidence base should be clearly presented without partiality and complemented by the thoughtful reflections of experienced clinicians (and others) and by accounts of illness from both clinicians and patients.

If you are interested in developing your skills in writing or reviewing please consider attending either of our workshops at the College Annual Meeting in June 2009 (see p. 208).

Minimal medication

In a review of the article by Calton & Spandler (pp. 209–217), the referee wrote 'Notwithstanding my personal disagreement with the content, this is still an excellent paper and richly merits publication ... It is, however, quite controversial and, in the interests of balance, might I strongly suggest commissioning two commentaries on it?' I took this advice and the article, together with commentaries by Feeney and by Moncrieff (pp. 218–220, 221–223), is my Editor's pick for this issue.

The language, accuracy and balance tests are met. Calton & Spandler concede that the evidence base is not without problem, but they are surely right in believing that this is an important area for us as clinicians in as much as we will all have patients who 'do not agree with a medical understanding of their symptoms'. A highlight is the personal account of the psychotic episode that Calton himself experienced. His description has the same 'directness and freshness' that Oyeboode (pp. 224–229) speaks of in literary accounts of psychiatric illness, drawing attention to 'the importance of the subjective, the relevance of differing perspectives and the contribution of values to decision-making'.

Davis J (2009) Enjoying and enduring: groups reading aloud for wellbeing. *Lancet*; 373: 714–5.