LETTERS

Reviewer diligence

I have just read your editorial “To review or not to review”. I can attest to the dominant prevalence of gatekeepers among reviewers, who seem to encounter nothing but gatekeepers in my attempts to publish. When I read your unique and astonishing admission that the “obsessive reviewer” who reanalyses the author’s data is “extraordinarily rare,” I immediately thought, “Aha! Suspicions confirmed.” The presumptive, rather presumptuous, confidence in medical editorial diligence that my mentors attempted to promulgate in my training at journal club meetings seems unjustified if, as you seem to imply, and as I have long suspected, editors and reviewers usually verify neither analyses nor conclusions of scientific submissions. If they don’t do that, what good are they? If they don’t do that, how can they justify publishing such results?

If the rarity of the “obsessive reviewer” is widespread, as alluded to by Sivakumaran’s letter on the “academic cartel,” goes a long way toward explaining the rejection of my manuscript, in which I analysed the reasons why the medical literature, according to analyses in the medical literature, in a high and consistent proportion of articles, over at least six decades (since the introduction of the randomised, controlled clinical trial in 1948 with the British study on streptomycin), has been abysmally poor, and in which I proposed solutions that required more relevant effort than editors and reviewers seem now to exert and change in focus on their part.

It also may explain why the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) did not answer my many duplicating letters (sent by post and email over an interval of three years) in which I pointed out the uniform failure, among medical editors, to adhere to the “uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to medical journal editors”, in particular, the provision, “statistical methods with enough detail to enable a knowledgeable reader with access to the original data to verify the reported results?” Medical articles do not provide original data, only summarized procedures thereof, so no reader, knowledgeable or otherwise, has access to original data and therefore no reader can ever verify reported results. Such editors seem not to want to contemplate their negligence, but do seem to want to perpetuate the mystical aura and authority of medicine in the absence of any rational foundation for it, while fraudulently paying lip service—for example: quoting evidence based medicine—to the very rationality they neglect.

In this context, the meaning, in any rational sense, of your suggestion that the “obsessive reviewer” be “somewhat frightening” seems obscure. Frightening to whom and why?

You seem to have indicated, in effect, that “obsessive reviewers,” by your assessment, are the only peer reviewers who perform their reviews in such a way as to come anywhere near justifying the accuracy and validity of, results in credibility and resultant prestige of the so-called “peer reviewed medical journal.”

In contrast, you have, by the same statement, conceded, in effect, that peer reviewers, in their majority, omit any statistical verification of results, published in the so-called “peer reviewed medical periodical literature,” and hence, by implication, fail to verify both the efficacy and safety of those treatments. Yet the so-called “peer reviewed medical periodical literature” indulges (unduly, it now seems) unsuspecting practitioners to apply such treatments, thus presumed “OK,” entirely on faith, to their unsuspecting patients.

Isn’t that prospect more frightening?

Furthermore, medical textbooks promulgate principles that they presume to validate by reference to results in the peer reviewed medical periodical literature. In turn, physicians study such medical textbooks and peer reviewed medical periodical literature in their quest to establish their qualification and cachet—for example, by advertising “FRCP,” “Board-Certified in Internal Medicine,” “Board-Certified in General Surgery,” etc. or at trials establishing their qualification as expert witnesses by asserting, under oath, that they hold such qualifications.

They acquire the right so to advertise and so to assert by passing certain examinations, for example, administered by the American Board of Internal Medicine, Royal College of Surgeons, Royal College of Physicians, Royal College of General Practitioners, etc. The questions in such examinations rely on the principles in medical textbooks and results published in the peer reviewed medical periodical literature.

Failure of diligence of peer review of the medical literature obviously removes any rational basis for relying on such unverified principles, based on such unverified results. Don’t medical editors have a duty to patient welfare to promulgate the crisis in confidence more broadly than in your journal alone?

Doesn’t the same duty extend to physicians, whose purported “qualifications” thus have no rational basis, so that they stand under an ethical obligation to withdraw any claim to prestige and cachet, based on such “qualifications,” and prevent perpetuation of the perpetuation of the current colossal fraud upon the public?

E N Grosch
10888 Hammock Drive, Largo, FL 33774, USA; digrosch@fastmail.fm

Rapid responses

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The editors will decide, as before, whether to also publish it in a future paper issue.

Reference


N Webbom
Medical Advisor, National Sports Medicine Institute of the United Kingdom, 32 Devanshire Street, London W1G 6XP, UK; nickwebbom@sportswise.org.uk; www.nsmi.org.uk

Vth World Congress on Science & Football

April 2003, Lisbon, Portugal

Further details: Dr J Cabri; email: jcabri@fmh.ult.pt
Web site: http://www.fmh.ult.pt/wesf

3rd Québec International Symposium on Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Evidence Based Interventions: Science to the Art of Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation

11–13 May 2003, Quebec City Convention Center, Quebec, Canada
Call for abstracts deadline is 1 November 2002. The abstract submission form and complete programme can be printed from the web site.
Further details: email: Jean.Jobin@med.ulaval.ca
Web site: www.ulaval.ca/symp-rehab

The International XVII Puijo Symposium: Physical Activity and Health—Gender Differences Across the Lifespan
25–28 June 2003, Kuopio, Finland
Further details: Puijo Symposium Secretariat.
Email: puijo.symposium@uku.fi; tel: +358-17-288-4422; fax: +358-17-288-4488

The Cutting Edge: Joint Conference of The British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences and The British Association of Sport and Exercise Medicine in association with the National Sports Medicine Institute
3–7 September 2003, Sheffield
Further details: R.M. Bartlett. Email: r.m.bartlett@shu.ac.uk

Football Australasia Conference
23–25 September 2003, Melbourne, Australia
Further details: Football Australasia Conference, P.O. Box 235, North Balwyn, Victoria 3104, Australia

17th Congress of the European Society for Surgery of the Shoulder and the Elbow (ESSSE)
24–27 September 2003 at the Convention Hall “Stadthalle” Heidelberg, Germany
Congress Chairman: Professor Dr med. habil. Peter Habermeyer; President of the Society: University-Professor Dr Herbert Resch.
Abstract deadline: 31 March 2003
Further details: INTERCONGRESS GmbH.
Email: katrin.volkl@intercongress.de; Tel: +49 611 97716-35; Fax: +49 611 97716-16; website: www.intercongress.de

The 6th STMS World Congress on Medicine and Science in Tennis in conjunction with the LTA 2004 Sports Science, Sports Medicine and Performance Coaching Conference
Further details: email: michael.turner@lta.org.uk

International XVII Puijo Symposium
25–28 June 2003, Kuopio, Finland
Further details: Ms Auli Korhonen, Project Secretary, Puijo Symposium Secretariat.
Email: auli.korhonen@uku.fi; website: www.puijosymposium.fi

The Fifth International Conference on Sport, Leisure and Ergonomics
19–21 November 2003, Burton, Cheshire, UK
A three day conference in affiliation with the Ergonomics Society.
Further details: Congress Secretariat, Sport, Leisure and Ergonomics, Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences, Liverpool John Moores University, Henry Cotton Campus, 15–21 Webster Street, Liverpool L3 2ET, UK; tel: +44 (0)151 231 4088; email: k.george@ljvm.ac.uk

NOTES AND NEWS

Winners of the annual BASEM Prizes
Dr Eileen Mackie (Clodipogrel inhibits platelet activation and exercise induced ischaemia in stable coronary artery disease) and Mrs Eleanor Curry (Role of exercise in multiple sclerosis) (joint winners).
The poster prize was won by Dr Stuart Reid (Injury patterns and injury prevention strategies in the winter sports population attending the English medical centre in Val D’Isere).

Diploma in Sport and Exercise Medicine for Great Britain and Ireland
Details for the above exam can be found on the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh Website at http://www.rcsed.ac.uk/alternative

applicants can write to: The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Eligibilities Section, Careers Information Services, 3 Hill Place, Edinburgh; tel: +44 (0)131 668 9222 or Mrs Yvonne Gilbert, Intercollegiate Academic Board for Sport and Exercise Medicine, Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DW; tel: +44 (0)131 527 3409; email: y.gilbert@rcsed.ac.uk

Intercollegiate Academic Board of Sport and Exercise Medicine Diploma Exam
The following were successful diplomates in the Intercollegiate Academic Board of Sport and Exercise Medicine Diploma Exam, the two exams held in 2001 and 2002:
• Dr Andrew I Adair
• Dr Abimola Afolabi
• Dr Sinead M Armstrong
• Dr Terence J R Babwah
• Dr Catrina E L Boyle
• Dr Susan J Brick
• Dr Lawrence J Conway
• Dr Alan J Dawson
• Mr Patrick D Dismann
• Dr Niall WA Elliott
• Dr Christopher J Ellis
• Dr Roger K Goulds
• Dr Niall A Hogan
• Dr James R Hopkinson
• Mrs Mananta K Jayanti
• Dr Michelle Jeffrey
• Mr S P Kale
• Dr Arun Kumar
• Dr Robert M MacFarlane
• Dr Kaushal C Malhan
• Dr Martin D McConaghy
• Dr Lisa A McConnell
• Dr Fergal T E McCourt
• Dr Ronan M McKeown
• Dr Michael G McMullan
• Dr Steven R McNelly
• Dr Paul J Moroney
• Dr Leonard D M Nokes
• Dr Nanda K G Pillai
• Dr Jonathan D Rees
• Dr Duncan A Reid
• Dr Cristyn C G Rhys-Dillon
• Dr Martin O Rochford
• Dr Hungerford A T Rowley
• Dr Shaun A Sexton
• Dr Michael G McMullan
• Dr Niall A Elliott
• Dr Steven R McNally
• Dr Paul J Moroney
• Dr Leonard D M Nokes
• Dr Nanda K G Pillai
• Dr Jonathan D Rees
• Dr Duncan A Reid
• Dr Cristyn C G Rhys-Dillon
• Dr Martin O Rochford
• Dr Hungerford A T Rowley
• Dr Shaun A Sexton
• Dr Michael G McMullan
• Dr Niall A Elliott

www.basem.co.uk
The British Association of Sport and Exercise Medicine has launched its new website—www.basem.co.uk. The site provides information about the educational opportunities in sport and exercise medicine and advice to those wishing to become involved in this area.