



Editorial: Change and stability



Colin Johnson, Editor-in-Chief

As the New Year starts, we would like to set out for you, the readers, how the *Annals* will develop over the next few years. Since the new team took over in August, we have taken some time to get to know the people involved, and how the process of publication all fits together. We have begun to address some of the obvious problems.

Authors had been waiting too long for publication of their research. In 2008, average time from submission to publication was 440 days, and from acceptance to publication 284

days. Irving Taylor, former Editor-in-Chief, had established additional issues (now 8 per year) to help reduce this waiting time. In addition he had already begun to publish on *FastTrack* a selection of papers, which appear online in advance of the print publication. During the last 6 months of 2009, we have kept up this pressure to reduce the time from acceptance to print publication, which now stands at 187 days. Importantly, all research papers are now published online within one month of acceptance.

It is paramount that authors receive a good service from the *Annals*. There are still delays in our system for reviewing submitted articles, because this has not been updated for many years. The majority of scientific journals now use electronic submission and manuscript handling systems and we are delighted to be able to inform you that the *Annals* will join them in the near future. We have set up and are testing our system using OJS software; this should be live for manuscript submissions and referees to use by the second quarter of 2010.

Authors, referees and the Editorial Board will see much more efficient working with the new OJS system. There will be easy online access for submission of papers, and for peer review. Automatic reminders will help to focus the referees on their task, and we will correct a long-standing deficit by automatic communication of Editor's decisions to the referees.

The *Annals* remains a journal for clinical research, of interest to all surgical disciplines. However, we can only publish what is submitted to us. If you feel your specialty is under represented, the solution lies with you, as a potential author. Papers from smaller specialties will be especially welcome. To promote better communication with all specialty groups, the Editorial Board is to be restructured, with defined roles for specialty editors, who will have a remit to stimulate contributions, as well as handle manuscripts from their specialty. The new Board will be announced in the March issue.

We have just finished a Readership Survey. Preliminary assessment shows that the clinically relevant content of the *Annals* is highly valued. Some content, such as Case Reports

and Meeting Abstracts, will be published online only in future. If you missed the opportunity to contribute to the Readership Survey, but would still like to share your views, please write to us or post a contribution on our new Readers Pages. To streamline publication of Correspondence arising from *Annals* content, or related to other aspects of the *Annals*, we now have open-access Readers Pages on our website at <<http://www.rceng.ac.uk/publications/readerspages>>. Authors can thus respond immediately if their paper is discussed. The Editor-in-Chief will select certain items for print publication from contributions to these pages.

It is not all change. Many current features are valued by the readership, and will continue. Reviews and Controversial Topics, reports from CORESS and NICE, and Technical Notes and Tips may be relevant across specialties. The *Annals* is uniquely placed to ensure that all surgeons have access to this material.

We are grateful to Professor Irving Taylor who handed over the *Annals* in such good shape, and who has been an invaluable source of advice and encouragement, and to the staff who work so hard to produce each issue of the *Annals*: Adam Brownsell, Matthew Whitaker (who has now moved on) and Jon Hackett. Ed Cornick is the new man at the front door keyboard, and is settling in well.

The *Annals* is a clinical research journal, relevant to and interesting for all Fellows and Members, and the wider surgical community. Our aim is to continue to improve this tradition, and to provide a quick, efficient service to our readers and authors in the coming years.

CD Johnson
Editor-in-Chief

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Chairman of the Editorial Board