

Farewell

This is my last issue of the *Annals* as Editor-in-Chief. It has been hugely enjoyable to lead the team that produces the *Annals* over the last five years, and I will miss the regular activity of handling submitted manuscripts, and the satisfaction of seeing each issue come together to make an interesting and varied collection of surgical papers.

Whatever has been achieved while I have occupied the Editor's chair has been largely due to the efforts of others. I am grateful to the team in the *Annals* office for their unfailing good humour and constructive support. Tara Nikovskis has been almost ever present in my time, first as Publications Manager then as Copy Editor. We were able to manage a sudden transition from our previous set up thanks to Tara's availability and willingness to step in at short notice. Our current *Annals* Manager, Matthew Whitaker, has been with the *Annals* for several years and will continue to give my successor wise counsel and unfailing support. Many who read this have provided their time and energy as reviewers, thus ensuring the standard of published articles continues to improve. I am indebted to the Editorial Board, whose role has changed. The active input into manuscript assessment of Section Editors has been invaluable; without them my work would have been much more difficult.

It has been particularly stimulating to work closely with such good colleagues as Editors, and Chairs of the Editorial Board. One very satisfying development has been the appointment of Associate Editors, to allow young consultants the opportunity to learn the ropes of editing a journal. I have been delighted to see them grow into the roles and go on to greater things.

In an era when scientific publication is dominated by impact factors, the *Annals* has tried to achieve different marks of quality. As a general journal for practising surgeons, we are looking for clinical papers, especially those which have interest across specialty boundaries. As a reader I always appreciate the *Annals'* ability to bring me up to date

in areas of surgery other than my own. As Editor-in-Chief, it has been a major objective to enhance that function. The fact that the *Annals* is consistently reported as the most read journal by UK consultants suggests that we publish papers of interest to many surgeons.

We have seen regular increases in the numbers of articles submitted in all categories (over 1,200 this year). This has enabled us to be more selective, and to accept only the most original and well conducted research papers. Currently acceptance rate for original research is 20%. Selection of case reports is even more rigorous. These are published online, and only if they are truly unique, or have a clear and topical learning point. Other regular features of the *Annals* have helped to ensure broad appeal across surgical specialties; I am grateful to Bruce Campbell for the regular updates from NICE, to Frank Smith for the CORESS reports and to Jyoti Shah for her series of reviews on perioperative problems.

Behind the scenes the *Annals* has changed enormously in the last five years. It is hard to credit that the office still functioned on a paper system such a short time ago! This included submissions, correspondence with reviewers and authors, and recording of all decisions. The introduction of the OJS manuscript handling system was a big step forward, but it cannot be denied that this system was difficult to get to know, and has needed constant revisions and improvements. I am hopeful that plans to significantly upgrade our manuscript handling system will come to fruition in the foreseeable future.

Other planned changes currently under discussion will roll out in the next two years, and will affect the way the *Annals* is put together and delivered to its readers. This will be an exciting time for the new Editor-in-Chief, Tim Lane, and the Editorial Board, who will keep you informed of these developments as they unfold. I wish Tim all the best in this role, I hope he enjoys it as much as I have.

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