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## Editorial

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# Continuing Professional Development in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*

Welcome to the first issue of *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* in the year 2001—which some people argue is really the first year of the new millennium. This issue includes the first article in our new series aimed at supporting Continuing Professional Development (CPD). It's easy to spot in the paper *Journal* because the articles have a distinctive format, including the use of colour. The pages are flashed in the outside margins for rapid access. The overall format is intended to promote ease of reading and clarity of the information. We want you to enjoy these articles as well as being educated by them. In the on-line journal, the overall layout will be the same as in the paper version. In the course of the coming year, we hope to be able to add extra value to the on-line version—for example, by providing direct links to original sources, or to other websites.

*Occupational and Environmental Medicine* has readers and contributors from a range of disciplines so the articles in the CPD series are intended to be of broad interest, and certainly not confined to narrow medical issues. Having said that, for occupational physicians in common with other doctors, there is going to be a requirement for regular reaccreditation and the CPD series in the *Journal* could form part of this in the future. You will notice that there are some multiple choice questions (MCQs) at the end of the article, based on the information in the article itself. The answers appear elsewhere in the issue (and in the on-line version). For the present, the MCQs are there just for interest, and because those readers who completed our questionnaire about CPD last year told us they would like MCQs. In collaboration with the Faculty of Occupational Medicine, we may in the future devise a way of occupational physicians returning their answers to the questions to the Faculty, either electronically or on paper, so that they can be logged and perhaps eventually marked as part of an accreditation scheme.

This is a new venture for *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* and we are feeling our way. We may not always hit just the right balance in some of our first articles in the series. The MCQs might not be as good as they could be. There are books and manuals written about how to design

good MCQs and so far we have been managing on a combination of questions submitted by the authors of the articles and the efforts of the subgroup of the editorial board working on the CPD series. We would very much appreciate your feedback about the series. You can give your views, ask questions, or raise related issues, either by writing to us in the traditional way or, better, by using the Rapid Response facility available on the website. This allows us to post responses within 24 hours and it means we can open a real dialogue, which is simply not possible in a monthly paper journal with the irreducible time for accepted material to appear in print (about 3 months).

Visitors to the journal website ([www.occenvmed.com](http://www.occenvmed.com)) are already starting to use the Rapid Response facility to comment on published articles, and the authors are responding to their comments, all within days rather than months. So far, the level of discussion is pretty good, and we are publishing the letters in the paper version later so that they can be read by those who only use the paper version of the *Journal*. I admit to still preferring to read articles on paper, but it's worth visiting the website for things like the Rapid Response option and links to data sources and other sites.

We intend to publish at least one CPD article in each issue of the journal, over time building up a valuable source of high quality educational material about important issues in the field of occupational and environmental medicine. If there are topics that you have a burning desire to see covered in the series, please let us know. We may well have already commissioned an article on the topic you want, but if not we can consider doing so. We see this series as being a bit like painting the Severn Bridge: we won't run out of topics because new developments will mean that we revisit topics already covered earlier in the series, or need to deal with newly recognised hazards or new techniques or methods.

I hope you enjoy the new series and I look forward to constructive dialogue about it.

ANNE COCKCROFT  
*Editor*



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ANNE COCKCROFT

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