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that describe studies carried out on human subjects must give evidence that the protocol was approved by an ethical committee and that all the subjects gave their informed consent.

There is no prescribed length for original papers but authors should not submit papers which exceed 10 000 words (about 30 typewritten sheets) without first consulting the Editor.

Original papers should follow the requirements of the International Steering Committee of Medical Editors; details, with which authors should familiarise themselves, are to be found in the *British Medical Journal* (1979;i:532-5). Papers should be prefaced by an abstract of the argument and findings and should be more comprehensive than a summary. The abstract must not contain references. Short reports or case reports do not require an abstract.

On acceptance of a manuscript, authors must send original copies of all illustrations to the Editor as quickly as possible. Photographs on glossy paper should be submitted unmounted. An internal scale should be provided on photomicrographs and details of any staining procedure included in the legend. Colour photographs will not be published unless the authors underwrite the cost of production. Charts and graphs should be carefully drawn in black ink on tracing linen, Bristol board, or stout white paper. Legends to figures should be typed on a separate sheet of paper.

Tables should be kept to a minimum and should not contain material that is fully described in the text. **They should be typed on separate sheets of paper.** Long appendices should be avoided. When the author considers it essential to include large numbers of tables or long appendices it may be possible to print them at the end of the text in miniprint. The Editor should be consulted in advance.

Signed editorials will normally be specially commissioned, and authors who are considering the submission of an editorial should do so only after consultation with the Editor. Letters to the Editor, which should not exceed 500 words (and in double spacing) may deal with any topic and will be published as soon as space permits. When letters refer to papers that have appeared in the Journal, the authors of the original paper will be given the opportunity to reply. Unsolicited book reviews will not be published.

**References** The number of references in the text of papers submitted should be kept to a minimum. They are required only if they are essential to the development of a hypothesis which the authors are proposing to test, if they are necessary for the development of an argument or discussion, or if they describe methods that are being used when the original account is too lengthy to be included in full.

Exhaustive lists of references are frequently included in a paper more to impress than to instruct and should be avoided whenever possible; over-frequent reference to the authors' own papers is an indulgence best avoided.

All references in material submitted to the journal must conform with the so-called Vancouver style which is intended to standardise requirements for authors. The style is described in detail in the *British Medical Journal* (1979;i:532-5) and authors are urged to study it carefully. Manuscripts in which the references do not follow the prescribed style will be returned to be amended before they are considered for publication. Reference lists should be **typed in double spacing**. The essentials of the style are as follows.

References should be numbered consecutively in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text by Arabic numerals above the line on each occasion the reference is cited. References cited only in tables or in legends to figures should be numbered in accordance with a sequence established by the first identification in the text of a particular table or illustration. The references must include: the names and initials of all authors (unless there are more than six, when only the first three should be given followed by *et al*); the title of journal articles or book chapters; the titles of journals abbreviated according to the style of the *Index Medicus*; the year and volume number; and the first and final page numbers of the article or chapter. Titles of books should be followed by place of publication, publisher, and year. **Papers given at meetings cannot be cited as a reference unless the proceedings have been published.** If they have not been published they must be referred to in the text.

Examples of common forms of references are:

- 1 International Steering Committee of Medical Editors Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals. *Br Med J* 1979;i:532-5.
- 2 Soter NA, Wasserman SI, Austen KF. Cold urticaria release into the circulation of histamine and eosinophil chemotactic factor of anaphylaxis during cold challenge. *N Engl J Med* 1976;294:687-90.
- 3 Weinstein L, Swartz MN. Pathogenic properties of invading micro-organisms. In: Sodeman WA Jr Sodeman WA, eds. *Pathologic physiology: mechanism of disease*. Philadelphia: W B Saunders, 1974:457-72.
- 4 Hargreave FE. Non-specific bronchial reactivity. In DeKock MA, Nadel JA, Lewis CM, eds. *Mechanism of airways obstruction in human respiratory disease Proceedings of the international symposium, Tygerburg South Africa, 1978*. Rotterdam: AA Balkema, 1979 77-87.

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