

Occupational and Environmental Medicine

Editorial

Occupational and Environmental Medicine and the London Faculty of Occupational Medicine

This is the first issue of *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* to be sent directly to all United Kingdom Fellows, Members, and Associates of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine in London. The *Journal* welcomes all those of you who are new readers and hopes that the new arrangement will also make life easier for those readers who previously had to rely on seeing a copy of *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* in their nearest medical library or fight for the departmental copy. The decision to provide *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* to United Kingdom Faculty Fellows, Members, and Associates was taken after a ballot, which was in favour by three to one. The Faculty subscription has been raised to take into account provision of *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* at a heavily discounted rate. United Kingdom Faculty members will also receive issues of the *Faculty Newsletter* with their copy of the *Journal*, at least four times a year. The style of the newsletter has been updated and we hope Faculty members will enjoy the new format.

What are the advantages to *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* and to the London Faculty of Occupational Medicine of this link? For *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* there is an increased circulation to occupational physicians in all types of United Kingdom workplaces. The arrangement is "financially neutral" but provides an opportunity to disseminate more widely the results of relevant research. All too often there seems to be an unbridgeable gulf between "ivory tower" researchers and "factory doctors", with the result that researchers investigate things that are not of great practical importance and practitioners fail to act on important research findings. Better dialogue between the two camps can help and the provision of *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* as part of the Faculty subscription is one way to achieve this for United Kingdom occupational physicians. Wider readership may help to increase the rate at which new ideas are put into practice, to encourage the challenging of controversial results, and to sow the seeds for further innovation and research in "real life" settings. Many papers published in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* are from authors outside the United Kingdom. This is a reflection of the source of good submitted papers and is in keeping with its international nature. If the broader United Kingdom readership helps to stimulate good papers from United Kingdom authors, this is all to the good.

Some practising occupational physicians may claim that they are too busy getting on with the job to read journals like *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, or that the articles published are too esoteric to be of any

interest to them. Hopefully, the convenience of a personal copy will tempt new readers between the covers. They will find there papers covering a wide spectrum of topics, with increasing emphasis on environmental as well as narrowly occupational issues. Soon, all published papers will include a structured abstract so that readers can rapidly grasp the main points and decide which articles to read in more detail. Book reviews will become a regular feature. There will be more editorials about issues of topical importance. And hopefully the expanded readership will lead to lively correspondence columns with readers commenting on published papers or submitting their own ideas or preliminary findings. We are also happy to publish good, original short reports, as described in the *Instructions to Authors* inside the front cover.

What are the benefits to the Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the arrangement with *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*? This link with one of the world's foremost journals in the field of occupational medicine ties in well with the requirement that all United Kingdom medical colleges and faculties must consider methods of continuing medical education for their members. Ensuring that the membership are kept abreast of research in the field by receiving *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* is a start. The receipt is a concrete reminder of Faculty membership once a month, with specific Faculty business covered in the *Newsletter* that will accompany *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* at least four times a year. This all helps to remind the membership what they are getting for their subscriptions. The arrangement will significantly reduce the costs of distributing the *Newsletter*.

Concern has been voiced about whether the Faculty of Occupational Medicine will exercise editorial control over *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* as a result of this arrangement. The answer is "no". The Editor—appointed by the BMJ Publishing Group—will continue to make all editorial decisions, with the support of an international editorial board. Observant readers will have noticed that the editorial board has been growing since the January 1994 issue and it is now complete for the time being. It includes one member proposed by the Faculty of Occupational Medicine as their representative and agreed by the Editor. This person has the same say as any other member of the editorial board. The board meets two or three times a year, with as many of the members who can manage to attend, to consider the *Journal's* overall progress and general policy issues, and agree the direction of the *Journal* over the coming months.

It is possible that other associations or faculties of occupational physicians in other countries may, in the future, want to make a similar arrangement with *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* so that their members can receive the *Journal* as part of their subscription. In principle, this would be possible, but each potential arrangement would be considered separately and entered into only if it was seen to be supportive of the aims of the *Journal*.

Any comments about *Occupational and Environmental*

Medicine are warmly welcomed, especially from new readers, as are submissions to consider for publication. All submitted material is subject to peer review. We are making strenuous efforts to reduce review time and publication delay of accepted papers; information about this will be published later this year. Whether readers, or contributors, or both, I hope you will enjoy *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* and find it useful and interesting.

ANNE COCKCROFT

Editor, Occupational and Environmental Medicine