

# Another changing of the guard at OEM, this time during the COVID-19 pandemic

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After seven busy and very enjoyable, although sometimes challenging, years as editor-in-chief (EIC) of *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* (OEM), it is time for me to move on and allow someone new to take over the leadership of the journal. The new EIC is my colleague and friend, Professor Hans Kromhout, from the Institute for Risk Assessment Sciences at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. Hans will be very well known to OEM readers, having been an associate editor for many years, as well as leading a very active research programme in occupational and environmental health, with many international collaborations. I wish Hans well in taking over this very important EIC role at OEM.

I first became involved with OEM in 1994 as one of the international members of the editorial board, soon after the journal had changed its name from the *British Journal of Industrial Medicine*, which originally began in 1944. I had various roles, first as an associate editor, a short period as commissioning editor and then as deputy editor before taking over from Dana Loomis as EIC in 2013. This 26-year journey with OEM is not yet over as I will be moving to the editorial board, which will complete the full circle of roles.

When I became EIC in 2013, I outlined in my first editorial what I saw as important areas to focus on in the next phase of OEM's development.<sup>1</sup> One objective was to increase the number of editorials and commentaries to appeal to a wider readership. This has been successful, and we have published at least one commentary or editorial in most print editions of OEM. This has been largely due to the great efforts of our long-standing commissioning editor, Manolis Kogevinas, and the very wide network of researchers he is able to call on to write these important articles for OEM.

One further area that I wanted to develop was publishing more intervention studies to provide a stronger evidence base for 'what works'. We have had some excellent intervention studies published in OEM,<sup>2</sup> but these studies are challenging

and this remains a research area needing more development. The other area I was very keen to develop further was publishing more environmental health papers, but OEM is just one of an increasing number of journals publishing environmental health papers, and papers in this field continue to be a small proportion of the OEM content. Another aim was to increase the OEM content from countries outside Europe, North America and Australasia, and we have had increasing content from many of these countries, most notably China.

The impact of a journal can be measured in many ways. The best known measure is the impact factor, and OEM has been consistently in the band between 3.5 and 4.0 over this period. As is well recognised, the impact factor has its limitations, and the impact of a journal needs to be considered in many other ways.<sup>3</sup> The Altmetric score, a collated score of attention in a variety of traditional media and social media platforms, has become another recognised measure to supplement citations and other more traditional measures of impact of a paper. To support this, OEM has appointed two social media editors who focus on increasing the social media footprint of OEM articles. Greater impact has also been promoted through the increasing number of OEM articles chosen for press release by the BMJ media relations team.

OEM has also increased its involvement with occupational and environmental health professional and research bodies. The journal has been the official journal of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians for many years and has recently become the official journal of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine. OEM also has very strong links with the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) and its Scientific Committee on Epidemiology in Occupational Health. OEM publishes abstracts from the regular Congress and conference, respectively, of these bodies and conducts publishing workshops for early career researchers. Another new development to increase impact has been to start publishing Position Statements on internationally important topics by

occupational and/or environmental health bodies, such as ICOH in its call to action to prevent tuberculosis among silica-exposed workers.<sup>4</sup>

I hand over the EIC role at a time when workers are facing unprecedented challenges to their health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>5</sup> Following our call for papers on the widespread impacts of COVID-19 on the health of workers, OEM has received an increasing number of papers. We have been arranging fast track review of COVID-19 papers, given the importance of this problem and the need to publish findings urgently. The COVID-19 pandemic has a long way to play out yet and will undoubtedly be an increasingly important and relevant topic for many future papers in OEM.

While I am stepping down as EIC of OEM, I will continue to be very active in occupational and environmental medicine. I have recently become President of the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine in the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. I am also chair of the organising committee of the next ICOH Congress, which is to be held in Melbourne, Australia, in February 2022. I would like to extend a very warm welcome to OEM readers to that Congress.

During my time as EIC at OEM, I have been fortunate to have strong support from my very experienced team of editors, including deputy editors, associate editors, commissioning editor, social media editors and the members of the editorial board. The BMJ staff have been of great assistance and have facilitated access to the many resources available to editors of journals in the BMJ Group. I have also been very grateful for the contribution and continuing support of our very committed bank of reviewers and last, but not least, the authors who continue to submit their work to OEM. Thank you to all, and I leave knowing OEM is in very capable hands as it moves into the next phase of its development.

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