“A naturalist life would be a happy one
if he had only to observe and never to write”
Charles Darwin (cit. in 1)

Since the 17th century, scientific journals serve as primary means of communication in science. We all are witnesses that last century is marked by an exponential rise of the number of biomedical journals. Even in small countries such as Serbia, a considerable number of journals exists (2,3), some 63 being in the field of biomedicine (4). However, unlike the editors of the journals of international reputation, who have enormous submission rate and therefore very high rejection rate (5), our editors face a completely different problem: already low number of submissions (6,7) is decreasing steadily...

This phenomenon, which worries all editors of our biomedical journals, has several underlying causes. First of all, Charles Darwin was right: many scientists do not like to write. Scientific writing requires permanent improvement of one’s communication skills, and the communication art has been for decades either neglected or ignored in education of our medical students*. In addition, the poverty and moral crisis that our society has met in last twenty years, has certainly significant impact on the lack of interest for publishing results of research among our scientists.

However, all scientists know that publication of research results is a must, since the research is not finished until the results are published, and since the underpublishing is an unethical issue (9,10). The other, not less important motive is the academic advancement. Academic carrier of a scientist (either clinician, teacher or professional researcher), depends heavily on the publications – as a matter of fact, it is, or it should be, the most important criterion for academic advancement (11,12). It is very important that they publish in journals visible on international level – that is, in those indexed in databases such as PubMed/MEDLINE, Current Contents, and CABS.

Therefore, the editors’ main aim is to achieve quality which would lead to their journal indexing in these databases. However, their efforts in this direction will fail unless they succeed to attract authors to submit manuscripts of quality. To help authors to improve their communication skills, editors must act as educators (13), and encourage authors to write for their journals (14,15). This implies:

- Organization of seminars on publication for young investigators – continual medical education
- Organization of seminars on peer review
- Organization of seminars on medical journal editing
- Publication of editorials, review articles and informative special articles on this topic

* Regarding this last issue, the University of Kragujevac Medical School should be praised for being the very first medical school which introduced a mandatory course on publication in biomedicine in PhD studies (8). Later, The University of Belgrade Medical School and Dental School, and University of Niš Medical School did the same. Since the year 2004, The University of Novi Sad organizes the seminar on publication in biomedicine each year.
I am convinced that all three main actors in publishing game – authors, reviewers and editors – will benefit of such education, and that the submission rate of MEDICUS will rise in near future. Several journals in our (5,16,17) and neighboring countries did the same in the past, and efforts of some of them (J BUON, Croat Med J) were awarded in a short period - they achieved to be covered in important databases (18-20). For example, the submission rate of J BUON rose instantly after this journal was included in PubMed/MEDLINE, so now even two or three issues can be prepared in advance (Athannsiou A.E., personal communication).

Let us hope that our journal MEDICUS will soon accomplish the same goal!

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LITERATURE

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