

Editorial

Citation and listing of references

It is not our practice to publish Editorials regularly, but only when it is necessary to draw the attention of readers and authors to major changes of policy or style. This is an appropriate time to introduce certain changes of style since the editorial chair will pass to another caretaker with the completion of the present volume. The editor of a scientific journal is, indeed, a caretaker who is responsible for supplying readers with the best available papers and to give a forum for new ideas while attempting to maintain high standards of science and of language. Regarding style, there is no right or wrong. "Proper words in proper places" said Swift, "make the true definition of a style," but also *de gustibus non est disputandum*. Inevitably the interests and prejudices of the editor will affect selection and style. For this reason it is in the best interests of the Journal that the editorship should change from time to time, though not too frequently. As the current volume is the tenth for which I have been responsible, it seemed appropriate for me to retire on its completion. The new editor will be Professor C. D. Marsden. An announcement of the details of the changeover will be made in a later issue.

This opportunity will be taken to introduce an important change. In volume 43 (January 1980) the Journal will abandon the Harvard system for quoting references in the text in favour of a numerical system, to conform with a decision of the *British Medical Journal* and its associated specialist journals, and also of many international biomedical journals, to adopt this system as a first move towards obtaining uniformity of publishing practice. We are not entirely convinced by the arguments for the numerical system which makes the detection of errors more difficult, especially if references have to be added or deleted during the editorial processes. Nonetheless the arguments in favour of standardisation are persuasive.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS FOR REFERENCES

Number references consecutively in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text. Identify references in text, tables, and legends by arabic numerals (in parentheses). 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 the particular table or illustration.

Use the form of references adopted by the US National Library of Medicine and used in *Index Medicus*. Use the style of the examples cited below which have been approved by the National Library of Medicine. The titles of journals should be abbreviated according to the style used in *Index Medicus*. Consult the "List of Journals Indexed" printed annually in the January issue of *Index Medicus*.

Try to avoid using abstracts as references; "unpublished observations" and "personal communications" may not be used as references, although references to written, not verbal, communications may be inserted (in parentheses) in the text. Include among the references manuscripts accepted but not yet published; designate the journal followed by "in press" (in parentheses). Information from manuscripts submitted but not yet accepted should be cited in the text as "unpublished observations" (in parentheses). The references must be verified by the author(s) against the original documents.

Examples of correct forms of references are given below.

Journals

- (1) *Standard journal article*—(List all authors when six or less; when seven or more, list only first three and add *et al.*)

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.

- (2) *Corporate author*

The Committee on Enzymes of the Scandinavian Society for Clinical Chemistry and Clinical Physiology. Recommended method for the determination of gamma-glutamyltransferase in blood. *Scand J Clin Lab Invest* 1976;36:119–25.

Books and other monographs

- (3) *Personal author(s)*

Osler AG. *Complement: mechanisms and functions*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976.

- (4) *Corporate author*

American Medical Association Department of Drugs. *AMA drug evaluations*.

- 3rd ed. Littleton: Publishing Sciences Group, 1977.
- (5) *Editor, compiler, chairman as author*
Rhodes AJ, Van Rooyen CE, comps. Textbook of virology: for students and practitioners of medicine and the other health sciences. 5th ed. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1968.
- (6) *Chapter in book*
Weinstein L, Swartz MN. Pathogenic properties of invading micro-organisms. In: Sodeman WA Jr, Sodeman WA eds. Pathologic physiology: mechanisms of disease. Philadelphia: WB Saunders, 1974:457-72.
- (7) *Agency publication*
National Center for Health Statistics. Acute conditions: incidence and associated disability, United States July 1968-June 1969. Rockville, Md.: National Center for Health Statistics, 1972. (Vital and health statistics. Series 10: Data from the National Health Survey, No 69) (DHEW publication No (HSM)72-1036).

For further general information on preparation of manuscripts and illustrations consult the report by the International Steering Committee of Medical Editors (1979).

STANDARDISATION OF STYLE

The citation and listing of references must conform to the Journal's requirements. So also must abbreviations, units, and symbols. This is a matter of communication between authors and readers from all parts of the world, and a previous Editorial (1975) gave the reasons for avoiding abbreviations and symbols which are not standard. At the same time the SI units were adopted. Our instructions to authors specify the authorities for these and for a code on ethics of human experimentation. The standard for abbreviations has been revised and is now the Third Edition (1977) of *Units, Symbols and Abbreviations*, edited by D. N. Baron for the Royal Society of Medicine, London. Other sources revised since 1975 are detailed below, including a change in the dictionary for spelling standards (*Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*) to conform with the practice of the *British Medical Journal*. These features are mandatory, in the interests of precision.

Intending authors should also study the 1975 Editorial for information on the scope of the Journal, its format, and style, and for advice on the preparation of copy. Every journal adopts a house style. This is normally less rigid than the

items discussed above. It is used to bring a semblance of coherence into a multi-author publication but mainly to improve communication by the use of unequivocal language. We require that papers be written in standard English, avoiding the jargon, neologisms, contractions, or telegraphic style which are convenient in clinic notes or in the operating theatre. This is not from pedantry. Language evolves, and contemporary or advanced usage is proper to those who play with words and phrases as an art but not for scientific communication. The Journal circulates throughout the world and is referred to by many without specialist training, often many years after the paper was written. There is a danger that local, esoteric, or simply fashionable terms may be misunderstood. The latter include the use of compound nouns and nouns used as adjectives, as in German, instead of simple prepositions. We trust that authors will continue to tolerate editorial changes which may appear to be mere whims, and to provide sufficient space between lines and in margins for this function. The retiring Editor is grateful to the many who have indulged his whims.

J. A. SIMPSON

Recommended references

- Baron, D. N., Broughton, P. M. G., Cohen, M., Lansley, T. S., Lewis, S. M., and Shinton, N. K. (1974). The use of SI units in reporting results obtained in hospital laboratories. *Journal of Clinical Pathology*, **27**, 590-597.
- Baron, D. N., Moss, D. W., Walker, P. G., and Wilkinson, J. H. (1975). Revised list of abbreviations for names of enzymes of diagnostic importance. *Journal of Clinical Pathology*, **28**, 592-593.
- Biochemical Journal (1976). Policy of the journal and instructions to authors. *Biochemical Journal*, **153**, 1-21.
- Editorial (1975). SI units and problems of communication. *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry*, **38**, 1-5.
- Enzyme Nomenclature (1973). Recommendations (1972) of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry and the International Union of Biochemistry. Elsevier, Amsterdam.
- Enzyme Nomenclature (1976). Supplement 1: corrections and additions (1975). *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta*, **429**, 1-45.
- International Anatomical Nomenclature Committee (1966). *Nomina Anatomica* (1966). 3rd edition. Excerpta Medica Foundation: Amsterdam.
- International Steering Committee of Medical Editors (1979). Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals. *British Medical Journal*, **1**, 532-535.

- International System of Units (1972). National Bureau of Standards, Special Publication 330. United States Bureau of Printing: Washington.
- McNalty, A. S. (1965). *Butterworths Medical Dictionary*. Butterworths: London.
- O'Connor, M., and Woodford, F. P. (1975). *Writing Scientific Papers in English*. Elsevier, Excerpta Medica, and North-Holland: Amsterdam.
- Royal College of Physicians of London (1973). *Committee on the Supervision of the Ethics of Clinical Investigations and Institutions*. Royal College of Physicians: London.
- Royal Society of London (1974). *General Notes on the Preparation of Scientific Papers*. 3rd edition. The Royal Society: London.
- Royal Society of London (1975). *Quantities, Units and Symbols*, 2nd edition. The Royal Society: London.
- Royal Society of Medicine (1977). *Units, Symbols and Abbreviations. A Guide for Biological and Medical Editors and Authors*, 3rd edition. Edited by D. N. Baron. The Royal Society of Medicine: London.