

**Coeditors**  
**Corédacteurs**

Jonathan L. Meakins, MD, *Montreal*  
tel 514 843-1504  
fax 514 843-1503  
email jonathan.meakins@muhc.mcgill.ca

James P. Waddell, MD, *Toronto*  
tel 416 864-5048  
fax 416 864-6010  
email waddellj@smh.toronto.on.ca

**Managing Editor**  
**Rédactrice administrative**

Gillian Pancirov, *Ottawa*

**Book Review Editor**  
**Rédacteur, critiques de livres**

William R.J. Rennie, MD, *Winnipeg*

**Editorial Assistant**  
**Assistante de la rédaction**

Melanie Mooy, *Ottawa*

**Editorial Board**  
**Conseil de rédaction**

Gilles Beauchamp, MD, *Montreal*  
Michael Gross, MD, *Halifax*  
Kenneth A. Harris, MD, *London*  
Geoffrey H.F. Johnston, MD, *Saskatoon*  
Réal Lapointe, MD, *Montreal*  
William J. Mackie, MB ChB, *Edmonton*  
Vivian C. McAlister, MD, *Halifax*  
Peter J. O'Brien, MD, *Vancouver*  
Eric C. Poulin, MD, *Toronto*  
William R.J. Rennie, MD, *Winnipeg*  
Norman S. Schachar, MD, *Calgary*

**Section Editors**  
**Rédacteurs des sections**

David P. Girvan, MD, *London*  
Donna I. McRitchie, MD, *Toronto*  
Peter L. Munk, MD, *Vancouver*  
Ori D. Rotstein, MD, *Toronto*  
Norman S. Schachar, MD, *Calgary*  
Nis Schmidt, MD, *Vancouver*  
Lawrence A. Stein, MD, *Montreal*



## Editor's View Mot de la rédaction

### Peer review

The concept of peer review is generally accepted as a necessary part of scientific and medical publishing. The purpose is relatively straightforward: an article submitted for publication is sent in its unedited form to a number of reviewers with interest in and knowledge of the field relevant to the manuscript. They critically appraise the manuscript, pose questions to the authors, and often make helpful suggestions that will improve the manuscript. Although details may vary from journal to journal, the basic aspects of peer review are accepted by authors and readers alike.

Recently, email correspondence on the Web site for the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) has raised a number of interesting questions about our continued acceptance of peer review. Doubt about its value has been fuelled by online publication of non-peer reviewed manuscripts in various medical and scientific fields. Many authors enjoy the freedom of not having to submit their manuscript for peer review, and it would appear that many readers appreciate being able to respond online to a non-peer reviewed article.

Peer review has been challenged and stands accused of, among other things, being a method by which print journals can limit the number of articles they publish, allowing disgruntled reviewers to exact revenge on authors for some previous slight, and allowing reviewers to "borrow" concepts or methodologies to their own advantage. Email on the WAME Web site has included the suggestion that the responsible medical editor should publish every article submitted without review or significant revision and allow readers to make their own decision regarding the manuscript's value.

An editor's job is to ensure that articles published are of the highest possible quality. In my opinion, most submitted articles are too long and must be revised for that reason alone; many others need removal of irrelevant data, inappropriate discussion and conclusions based on supposition rather than the facts presented in the body of the manuscript. No editor, however, will have sufficient knowledge to address the scientific relevance and value of every topic of articles submitted to a multidisciplinary journal such as the *Canadian Journal of Surgery (CJS)*. Therefore, it is essential that the peer review process continue in our journal so that nominated experts can gauge the appropriateness of the work described and the validity of the conclusions drawn by the authors. By selecting reviewers with a known interest and expertise, ensuring that they are well schooled in the principles of scientific reading and writing, and ensuring that an adequate number of reviewers are appointed for each article, the editor feels much more comfortable when accepting or rejecting an article for publication.

The *CJS* peer review process is constantly evolving. The number of reviewers has been expanded; the reviews themselves are requested in a structured format; and every paper accepted for publication has, in my opinion, been improved by the peer review process.

Hand in hand with peer review goes the entire question of authorship. Authorship is important not just in academic circles, however, but in medicine as a whole so that the reader can clearly and fairly attribute published work to specific individuals who are willing to take responsibility for the data and opinions expressed in the published article. In the next Editor's View Dr. Meakins and I plan to address the issue of authorship and set out some new rules for the attribution of work published in the journal. ■