

Time for change

In the 20 years of its existence, the *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health* has developed from virtually nothing into a truly international scientific publication. It now has a circulation of 1400 and is read in 52 countries. Many regard it as one of the four to five leading occupational health journals in the world.

Our subscribers represent a great variety of categories, but two distinct groups form the majority. These are libraries of universities, other institutions of occupational health, and occupational health centers of large and medium-sized companies. The first group represents researchers, the second occupational health practitioners. Our journal tries to serve both, but combining their rather different interests in the framework of one journal is not always easy since researchers and practitioners are often interested in different types of articles.

It may well be that researchers have so far received the lion's share of attention in our journal, although we have tried to serve practitioners by publishing review articles in almost every issue. Although many of our reviews have addressed practical issues, it cannot be denied that many have been rather "scientific" in spite of our general aim, mainly because "scientific" reviews are usually submitted on the authors' initiative, while "general" reviews are, for the most part, invited by the editor, who often needs great powers of persuasion to succeed.

Now, after 20 years, the time has come to reassess the aims and contents of our journal. Our readers have an increasing need to be served information relevant to them in a concise form because the output of journals, electronic data bases, and conferences is so overwhelming that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for everyone, not the least practitioners, to extract relevant information satisfactorily. A modern journal, especially one in the applied field of occupational health, should do its best to meet these challenges by collecting and distributing the essentials of new knowledge to its readership in an easily accessible form. This approach calls for deviation from the publishing policy and contents of what has been known as the "classical" or "typical" scientific journal. Scientists, being the producers of knowledge, may disagree, but the needs of other customers of a journal, the consumers of information, must also be kept in mind. Is the old-fashioned scientific journal still the optimal channel of information for readers? Could one combine *both* high-level original data *and* more general information in the same journal? We will try.

With this objective in mind, the editors of the *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, representing the publishers, that is, the institutes of occupational health in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, discussed these matters at their annual meeting in the spring of 1994. They concluded that the Journal should be gradually developed along new lines from 1995 on.

Accordingly, while still emphasizing traditional contents of original scientific articles and scientific reviews, and publishing, as before, "Short Communications," "Case Reports," "Correspondence," and "Book Reviews," space will also be reserved for more practically oriented "Reviews," "Opinions," "Meeting Reports," "Congress Reports," and "News," the last mostly consisting of short abstracts of important articles published elsewhere, as well as of personal and organizational news from the world of

occupational health. Editorials will be published, at least occasionally, and “Announcements” of coming events such as congresses and courses will be published as before. The format of the Journal has been changed, as can be seen from this issue, and the editors will consider in a very positive way any constructive new proposal for further improving the contents.

In addition, one should not forget the word “Environment” in the title of the Journal. From the very beginning, our intention has been to include work relating to problems of the general environment, as long as the topic has health relevance. Few such articles have, however, been published, mostly because few have been submitted. We hope for more contributions in this area, and I can assure potential contributors that this topic will receive close attention as long as the quality of the article is high.

Some of the new topics to be included in the Journal appeared already in 1994, for example, “Congress Reports,” but we will try to increase the speed from this issue on. Especially “News” are welcome from all over the world, and our readers are encouraged to submit contributions to the editors for rapid publication. Short abstracts of articles published in languages other than English are particularly welcome. Debate is always interesting. In this issue you can already find a “Commentary” article — discussion is invited and so are more commentaries or opinions on whatever relevant topic.

The editors do hope that these changes will gradually make the *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health* even more attractive to its readers, and we invite feedback and constructive criticism — irrespective of whether it is intended for publication or not.

Sven Hernberg, MD
Editor in Chief