

EDITORIAL

Professor RP Gräbe has been Editor-in-Chief of the *South African Orthopaedic Journal (SAO)* since its inception in 2002, and laid the foundation of possibly the only peer-reviewed orthopaedic journal in Africa. The journal presents an opportunity to all orthopaedic surgeons on the continent to publish their work, particularly on topics of interest that are often more pertinent to Africa. We see a wide diversity of unusual pathology in large numbers, and certain of these diseases are not commonly present in the more developed world. The journal is available online¹ and can easily be accessed electronically. Like most things in life the development of the journal is a work in progress and part of an evolution, and like most things in life will in future be subject to change and development. The Editorial Board has recently been restructured, and we have added an Associate Editors' group of international experts whom we hope will contribute to the evolution, development and quality of the *SAO*.

All articles submitted to the journal are subject to peer review by acknowledged experts in their fields. The peer-review process can at times be harsh in its judgement, but all efforts will be made to keep it as fair and equitable as possible. Some articles are found to have important content but are not acceptable for publication in the format submitted. Suggestions will then be made to the authors about changes that would make some of the important information in the article available to their colleagues. We will endeavour to attempt not to do this too often, in order to avoid the type of criticism from a frustrated author set out in the following heavily edited letter accompanying an article submitted elsewhere.

Enclosed is our latest version of Ms.#1996-02-22-RRRRR, that is the re-re-re-revised revision of our paper. Choke on it. We have again rewritten the entire manuscript from start to finish. We even changed the g-d-running head! Hopefully, we have suffered enough now to satisfy even you and the bloodthirsty reviewers.

Some of the reviewers' comments we could not do anything about. For example, if (as C suggested) several of my recent ancestors were indeed drawn from other species, it is too late to change that. Other suggestions were implemented, however, and the paper has been improved and benefited from them. Plus, you suggested that we shorten the manuscript by five pages, and we were able to accomplish this very effectively by altering the margins and printing the paper in a different font with a smaller typeface. We agree with you that the paper is much better this way.

One perplexing problem was dealing with suggestions 13–28 by reviewer B. As you may recall (that is, if you even bother reading the reviews before sending your decision letter), that reviewer listed 16 works that he/she felt we should cite in this paper. These were on a variety of different topics, none of which had any relevance to our work that we could see. Indeed, one was an essay on the Spanish-American war from a high school literary magazine. The only common thread was that all 16 were by the same author, presumably someone whom reviewer B greatly admires and feels should be more widely cited. To handle this, we have modified the Introduction and added, after the review of the relevant literature, a subsection entitled 'Review of Irrelevant Literature' that discusses these articles and also duly addresses some of the more asinine suggestions from other reviewers.

We hope you will be pleased with this revision and will finally recognize how urgently deserving of publication this work is. If not, then you are an unscrupulous, depraved monster with no shred of human decency. You ought to be in a cage. May whatever heritage you come from be the butt of the next round of ethnic jokes. If you do accept it, however, we wish to thank you for your patience and wisdom throughout this process, and to express our appreciation for your scholarly insights. To repay you, we would be happy to review some manuscripts for you – please send us the next manuscript that any of these reviewers submits to this journal.

Assuming you accept this paper, we would also like to add a footnote acknowledging your help with this manuscript and to point out that we liked the paper much better the way we originally submitted it, but you held the editorial shotgun to our heads and forced us to chop, reshuffle, hedge, expand, shorten, and in general convert a meaty paper into stir-fried vegetables.

We could not – or would not – have done it without your input.

I think many of us have been subjected to this process which can be very frustrating and discouraging.

Letters to authors on published articles are welcomed, and if the Editorial Board feel that any criticisms of the articles are pertinent they will forward these to the authors for their response. The discourse will then be published in the journal. This type of communication often helps to clarify matters and could be of benefit to readers who might also have been unsure about certain contents or conclusions in the article. It must nevertheless be remembered that, prior to publication, the article has been through a peer-review process, and as a result letters of criticism will not automatically be forwarded to authors, and will initially be considered by the Editorial Board. Should the Board decide not to publish the criticism, then the Editor will reply to the critic privately.

I look forward to our journal continuing in the growth, quality and stature that Professor Gräbe built up. Any journal is only as good as the material that is submitted to it, and we encourage all members of the orthopaedic community, both locally and abroad, to submit their work and research for publication. Instructions and guidelines to authors are published in each issue of the journal, and submitting authors are urged to read these prior to sending in their articles. All criticisms of the journal, including suggestions as to how it could be improved, will be welcomed and considered by the entire Editorial Board.

I look forward to the work ahead in being involved in the running of our *SA Orthopaedic Journal*.

Reference:

1. *South African Orthopaedic Journal*, summer edition 2013.

Prof Anton Schepers
Editor-in-Chief

