

## International Names

Sun and Zhou<sup>1</sup> present important information to help editors work with transliterated names of Chinese authors. Additionally, they recommend typesetting Chinese authors' surnames in full capitals to reduce confusion about surnames and given names. They also note that many English-language publications insist on placing surnames after given names, which is contrary to Asian custom.

The suggestion is good and the criticism valid, but I suspect that most journal formats are set in concrete, especially in some of the larger publishing firms. Unfortunately, the issues Sun and Zhou raise are not peculiar to Chinese authors' names. Many international writers probably have had their names mangled by English-language publications. (I would like to see articles about working with transliterated Arabic or Thai names, for example.)

Authors have every right to feel annoyed when their names appear incorrectly in journals or reference databases. But if an author's surname is misprinted, scientists can usu-

ally find the correct reference by using key words, a range of years, a journal name, or coauthors' names. The present systems are imperfect and are not the best we could have, but papers are found and research continues.

Although Sun and Zhou make reasonable suggestions, it may be a long time before English-language journals will be ready for the changes they propose. Meanwhile, editors can simply make a point of querying surnames, spelling, and use of hyphens. Asian and other international authors, for their part, can help editors and indexers by selecting English transliterations that appeal to them and using them consistently.

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### Reference

1. Sun XL, Zhou J. English versions of Chinese authors' names in biomedical journals: observations and recommendations. *Sci Ed* 2002;25(1):3-4.