

◆ *Scientific Authorship and Editing in the Developing World*

Moderator and Speaker:

Ana Marusic
Croatian Medical Journal
Zagreb, Croatia

Speakers:

James Tumwine
African Health Sciences
Kampala, Uganda

Thomas Goehl
Environmental Health Perspectives
Cary, North Carolina

Phyllis Freeman
Journal of Public Health Policy
Boston, Massachusetts

Anthony Robbins
Journal of Public Health Policy
Boston, Massachusetts

Reporter:

Emmanuel Ameh
Annals of African Medicine
Zaria, Nigeria

What problems and challenges face authors and editors in the developing world? How do we hope to overcome the problems?

Ana Marusic especially welcomed editors from developing countries. She noted that the main problems facing scientific authorship and editing in low-income countries are related to a small scientific community and financial and communication difficulties, which result in poor visibility of journals and publications and a cycle of inadequacy. Authors and reviewers are few. The *Croatian Medical Journal* has tried to help authors improve their papers and encourage the teaching of writing skills in medical schools. According to Marusic, editors in developing countries should educate authors, reviewers, readers, researchers, students, and policy-makers to improve publications and to generate sup-

port for their journals.

James Tumwine, chair of the Forum for African Medical Editors (FAME), reflected on the future of publishing in developing countries. He spoke about the objectives of FAME, which are to help African editors produce journals with high-quality articles and to increase the visibility of African journals. He emphasized that poverty and regional imbalances were major obstacles, worsened by a brain drain, involving some

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of Africa's best researchers and experts, to developed countries. Tumwine showed how *African Health Sciences* has tried to overcome problems in distribution, visibility, regularity of publication, and financial sustainability. He acknowledged the efforts of a partnership of four African journals with similar journals in the United States and the United Kingdom. He also noted that *Medical Education Resource Africa* and the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications have helped to raise the profile and visibility of African journals.

Thomas Goehl, who has worked in developing countries, spoke on "Publishing in the Developing World: Western Perspectives". He noted that a unique need exists for regional journals to publish relevant research, continue education, provide information for local professionals, and provide a forum for aspiring researchers to enhance publication skills. He further noted that good research and publications

exist in developing countries but often go unnoticed by the developed world, largely because of the low visibility of the journals. Goehl emphasized that the developed world should improve the contribution to adequate knowledge, reduce disparities in public health, and facilitate improvements in research both for self-interest and for good international relations.

The main obstacles for regional journals are insufficient resources, poor quality of submitted articles, limited peer review by experts fluent in the local language, and a reluctance by authors to submit their best articles, because of concerns about the stature and visibility of the journals. Goehl proffered possible solutions, including identifying funding organizations; expanding training and mentoring of authors, reviewers, and editors; developing journal partnerships; copublishing articles in partner journals; sharing appropriate news coverage for translation and publication in regional journals; and educating policy-makers to encourage capacity-building and support for journals.

Phyllis Freeman presented the developing initiative AuthorAID, which is intended to help authors in resource-poor countries present their work in a form more likely to survive peer review and be published. AuthorAID aims to identify authors with promising drafts, ideas, or data and match them with developmental editors or mentors (for example, retirees or less-busy editors). A small AuthorAID staff would monitor the development of articles from conception to publication. The program would be labor-intensive. Freeman and Robbins are making contacts to actualize the concept.

There was general agreement that efforts need to be intensified to support authors and editors in low-income countries and that CSE should lead and support such efforts. 🗣️