◆Retreat, Part 2: Task Force on Science Journals, Poverty, and Human Development

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Opening Part 2 of the task force retreat, Richard Horton borrowed a question from an audience member at E O Wilson's keynote address: "What do we do on Monday morning?" Although it may have been coincidence that the retreat was on a Monday, the practical nature of the question was not lost on this audience. In the first section, "Devoting Journal Pages to the Issues of the Developing World", Annette Flanagin and David Dickson presented two distinct but compatible perspectives: those of an established medical journal and an innovative science information network.

Flanagin highlighted our responsibility to provide and promote sound global health research. Of a half-million citations on PubMed every year, fewer than 10,000 are relevant to developing nations. Low-income countries fall prey to the publication gap, contributing less than 2% of all medical articles. A 2001 study of the top five medical journals found that 2% to 21% of articles were pertinent to poor countries. Barriers to publication by authors in developing nations involve practical and political concerns, such as difficulties with English, unfamiliarity with the peer-review system, poor working conditions, perceived editorial bias, and overemphasis on the impact factor by Western journals. Solutions include educating fellow editors and peer reviewers about the needs of developing nations, using surveys to determine editorial priorities, taking a multilingual approach, broadening geographic representation of authors and editors, and fostering partnership programs between Western journals and those of developing nations. In 2007, CSE will sponsor a global "theme issue" on poverty and human development, open to journals of all scientific disciplines. Flanagin closed by requesting suggestions on the publication date.

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As the founder and director of *SciDev.Net*, Dickson believes that research in developing countries must be supported by all possible means, not just by scientists, but by public policy-makers and those who influence them. *SciDev.Net* is a news Web site that provides summaries of top science and technology articles relevant to the developing world, written in context by freelance correspondents in those countries. It includes links to the full text of the original articles in *Science* and *Nature* (and, Dickson hopes, other journals to follow). Articles are accessible in straightforward language (some are translated into other languages), perspective, and cost (*SciDev.Net* is free). Material is grouped into dossiers, such as "Bird Flu" and "Biodiversity". The site also contains feature stories, editorials, and opinion pieces. Registered users are mainly in developing nations: scientists, professors, students, journalists, government decision-makers, consultants, and policy researchers. In addition, *SciDev.Net* mentors journalists and conducts capacity-building workshops to teach scientists how to communicate their research effectively. The idea is to allow authoritative scientific information to appear in regional presses to influence policy and effect change. According to Dickson, our global health depends on it.

In the second section, "Open Knowledge and Human Welfare", Gavin Yamey called for an expansion of the "knowledge commons". Much scientific information is inaccessible to poor countries because of prohibitive charges or copyright laws; removal of these barriers may have enormous benefits. For example, in the Green Revolution, the transfer of findings from Western plant-breeding programs to local research institutions in developing nations led to huge increases in food production. The GenBank database makes DNA sequences publicly available for medical research. Recently, results of the first randomized trial of circumcision to reduce HIV transmission were provided to African medical journals and health ministers under a Creative Commons license, which permits information to be used for any legal purpose as long as the source is cited. Yamey gave an example of the creative use of Creative Commons: a group of Danish students published their recipe for open-source beer online! He may have had tongue in cheek, but his point is well taken with regard to sharing scientific information around the world: "Once knowledge is truly in the public domain, the only limit on its use is imagination."