

## EDITORIAL

### A new hand but the same pencil

During the past 2 years the Journal has been through a series of evolutionary changes under the chairmanship of Professor Gurr, which have substantially changed the appearance of the Journal and the layout of the papers; changes that have, in the opinion of most readers, improved and up-dated the image of the Journal.

In taking over the chairmanship of the Editorial Board I plan to continue along the path outlined by Professor Gurr to establish the *British Journal of Nutrition* as the first choice for publication of the results of nutrition research, while maintaining past standards.

I believe that the nutritional sciences, especially those concerned with human nutrition, have reached a critical and exciting stage in their development and that there is a need to encourage the exploration of nutritional concepts and their rigorous experimental evaluation. Predictive, quantitative nutritional hypotheses are required for the areas of nutrient requirements, nutritional status and the wide and complex area of the relation between diet and health. These will come by extending the existing multidisciplinary base of the nutritional sciences and ensuring that proper use is made of physical techniques and developments in molecular biology. The boundaries between the fields of study presently characterized as food safety, food toxicology and nutrition are artificial and need to be progressively dissolved if we are really to understand the relation between diet and health. The statistical, or more correctly mathematical sciences, have an important role, because in the study of diet and health we need techniques of multivariate synthesis rather than analysis in order to achieve the nutritional goal of describing the effects of the diet as a whole.

Food choice is of paramount importance in determining the types and amounts of foods eaten and consequently there is a need to study the physiological and other factors that determine food choice.

In the field of nutrition research, and indeed in many others, rapidity of publication is much prized but the central role of peer refereeing must remain. The reputation of the *British Journal of Nutrition* rests to a great extent on the high standards of refereeing, including the valuable work of statistical editors. The Editorial Board continually strives to reduce the time between submission and acceptance or rejection of papers; however, circumstances outside our control can introduce delays that appear unreasonable.

Like many researchers, my relationship with the Journal in the past has been a distinctly love:hate one, especially when I felt that a referee or editor was being unreasonable in demanding a different type of statistical analysis or suggesting additional experimental work that 'I might like to consider'. I hope that potential authors will find it reassuring that the chairman has experienced both rejection and acceptance at the pen of previous editors and understands their feelings very well.

In the 1960s Peter Medawar edited a series of talks on radio on the general theme that 'the scientific paper is a fraud'; not that the material published was in itself fraudulent but that the structure of the scientific paper did not properly represent the sequence of events nor the development of ideas that lay behind the research findings being presented. At the time I thought that, as the senior editor of a journal, he was ideally placed to change the system, so that the path of experiment and understanding would be more accurately

conveyed to the reader of a scientific paper. I would like to encourage authors of papers to present their work in a way that refutes the charge of Peter Medawar because I believe that this will lead to more effective communication of research, and especially the exhilaration and the effort of research and its rewards.

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