

## Editorial

### "To reach a new horizon"?

In 2003, I had the honour to lead the Editorial Board and have since been working with admirable editorial board members. After four years, it is now time to appraise what the Board has done and achieved.

Currently, the Journal has a regular circulation of around 500 copies, with readers from dermatologists, non-dermatologist clinicians, paramedics, medical administrators and medical students. In 2003, the Journal had a facelift and became hard-covered with a quiz photo in the centre front. The back is ridged to allow easy retrieval from a packed bookshelf. Apart from editorial, quiz, reports on scientific meeting and Journal watch, there are four important columns in every issue, namely original articles, review articles, case reports and pearls. These four columns account for a total of 112 articles in 16 consecutive issues. There is at least one article of each column published every issue. The editing work relies entirely on the voluntary efforts of the members of the Editorial Board. It is reassuring that the Journal is at present self-sufficient with revenue generated from advertisements.

Over these four years, the Journal has moved a few important steps forward. Since 2003, the Journal's electronic version has been available on the net for visit by eligible readers. The issues back from 1998 are available in electronic form. In terms of quality enhancement, each of the four regular columns is peer reviewed by experts outside the board. A subtle change is worth of mentioning. The Journal has received good contribution from non-dermatological medical professionals in recent years. For example, 56%

of the review articles and 43% of the pearl articles were contributed by non-dermatologist professionals, a supporting evidence of the wider acceptance and heightened academic status of the Journal. Most significantly, the hard work of the editorial board members and good-quality contributions from medical professionals were rewarded by the recognition of the Journal for Embase indexing, effective since 2005.

What the Journal should aim at? It is logical to aim at a wider circulation of the Journal among medical professionals locally and outside Hong Kong. Struggle for Medline indexing is another goal that is always in our mind. How could these be accomplished? In essence, both scenarios are interdependent. Free e-journal browsing by worldwide visitors promotes wider circulation and good quality articles are prerequisite for Medline indexing, which in turn will attract more readers. However, effective article search on the net needs a powerful search engine and regular conversion of the full article text into searchable data base has to go in parallel.

What are then the obstacles that our Journal is facing? Keeping an e-journal needs good financial support. Obviously, the present Journal income that depends solely on advertisements is inadequate for upgrading the e-journal search power or to keep an up-to-date database. Further, recruitment of advertisements is becoming more difficult nowadays. The Journal aims at international circulation but it is locally born. Local contributions of good quality articles are thus fundamental. At present, articles ready on hand for publication are just sufficient for two issues.

Results of a survey on first authorship of original, review, pearls, case reports and quiz articles published from 2003 to 2006 showed that first authors from the public services contributed more than two-thirds of them. This is followed by non-dermatologists who contributed one-quarter and the rest by private dermatologists. At present, there are 70 odd specialists in dermatovenereology in Hong Kong, but only one quarter of them plus 20 odd trainee medical

officers are working in the public services. The distribution ratio appears to be disproportionate to the source of articles. Could our Journal "reach a new horizon"? This is an open question for all.

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