

EDITOR'S PAGE

Components of a scientific journal such as *Spinal Cord*



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Dear *Spinal Cord* reader,

Most things change over time. Scientific journals are very different today compared with a few decades ago. So what are the individual components that comprise a scientific journal?

A scientific journal is a periodical publication intended to further the progress of science, usually by reporting new research or the evolution of previously published research. Many journals are highly specialized, and *Spinal Cord* is an example of this: it brings together clinical and scientific papers in a wide range of fields related to spinal cord medicine. Peer review of submitted manuscripts is, these days, an integral part of the process. It ensures that articles meet the journal's standards of quality and scientific validity. This selection process is more strict than in former times. All manuscripts submitted to *Spinal Cord*, which pass the first evaluation at the editorial office, are peer-reviewed. Review articles, standardization reports and book reviews are also evaluated by independent scientists and clinicians.

A scientific journal may superficially be considered similar to a professional magazine, but it is actually quite different. A scientific journal is rarely read casually, as one would read a magazine. The readers are more specialized, their reading more focused and the contents of what they read must be of direct relevance to their personal knowledge and skills. This is also important in the choice of journal that authors submit to. Authors are, understandably, keen on having their work spread as quickly and as widely as possible among those who are working in the same field. In *Spinal Cord*, a specialized author can reach the readership he looks for.

This issue, 46.6, of *Spinal Cord* contains several letters to the editor. When a journal's editorial office receives correspondence on previous publications, and communication starts between the original authors and the writers of the letters, another step in scientific level is reached. I do not always agree with what another author publishes, but if I let him know my concerns and he replies to me, then we both will have gained in knowledge. In *Paraplegia* issues, which date from the launch of the International Medical Society of Paraplegia, discussions on presentations during the annual scientific meeting were published as such. This has been abandoned, as the discussions are not sufficiently evidence-based, but they are not without interest. Communication on scientific data is, without doubt, extremely important and useful.

Book reviews are also important. If publishers contact our editorial office to have their recent works reviewed, and such reviews are published in our journal, it means that *Spinal Cord* is considered by them to have a readership with particular interest in the books' contents. We are happy to receive such requests very regularly.

In recent years, it has become exceedingly difficult to stay up-to-date on all the topics one would like, as there has been so much change in the quantity and variety of research published and the speed with which areas advance. Research is increasingly international, with good work performed all over the world. This is why good review articles become so useful and interesting, as they present huge amounts of data in a more easy to read summary. We try to have at least one review article in each issue. If you want to cooperate in this, please suggest a topic and send us a manuscript. The impact is high, as review articles are among the most referenced contributions.

Many good scientific works can be found in this issue. Enjoy the reading.

Important note: It is extremely rare that a submitted manuscript gets 'lost' in the system. But it has occurred. So do not hesitate to contact us if no reply is sent within a couple of weeks after submission.