

Editorial

The Journal Continues to Advance

Edward E. Lawson, MD

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For those of you who do not read the *Instructions to Authors* on an issue-by-issue basis, the newly revised Instructions describe the method for submitting manuscripts in electronic format to the Journal editorial office. Electronic manuscript submission will increase service to authors and our audience by improving timeliness of our published articles.

During May 2002 we initially offered electronic submission and review after Nature Publishing Group (NPG), our publisher, developed this capability. Since 2001, NPG has been evaluating candidate programs to be an enterprise-wide software publishing system. Several candidates were considered. The current program best meets NPG's needs for processing manuscripts at all their journals and for vertically integrating the whole publishing process from manuscript submission to production.

This writing takes place during the first week of our using the new program, so I am sure that various minor problems will arise. Nevertheless, we expect several new opportunities for our authors, reviewers, and readers. Authors will recognize two new advantages for submitting articles to the Journal. First, electronic submission of their manuscript will insure that the manuscript is available to the editorial office intact and within seconds of submitting using the electronic format. We will still accept manuscripts submitted on paper, though we will convert paper manuscripts into electronic format for review. Authors will be notified electronically of decisions regarding their manuscripts and encouraged to resubmit electronically. These changes are expected to result in considerable time and cost savings. Second, authors will have the opportunity to check the status of their own manuscripts using Internet access to the *Journal of Perinatology* database. This database is password protected so each manuscript will be available to only the authors, the editorial staff, and the external reviewers. As each step of the review process is completed, the computer will automatically update the manuscript status so

an author may track their manuscript's status through the review process.

Another time-saving opportunity will be contacting potential reviewers by e-mail regarding their availability to review a particular manuscript. Upon an affirmative response from the prospective reviewer accepting responsibility for performing a review, the manuscript will be made available in electronic format within a very short period. This strategy will be supported by the database of reviewer interests that we have developed over the past 18 months. In addition to reviewer interests, we track quality of reviews and number of reviews per reviewer. In this manner, we continue to use high-quality reviewers that respond in a timely fashion and yet attempt not to overwhelm the best reviewers. Also, since this system is Internet based, we will be able to effectively utilize our international editors and reviewers to add their specific research strengths to our review process. Reviewers' comments are submitted electronically and instantly received by the editorial office, again enhancing decision time. An advantage for reviewers is that they will receive the comments of the other reviewers as decisions are made regarding the manuscripts reviewed. This process of rapid feedback regarding the opinions of the reviewers is expected to further improve the overall review process for each reviewer.

The newly revised *Instructions to Authors* also encourage authors to suggest potential reviewers for their manuscripts. Authors may also exclude a reviewer if they wish. The Editor remains responsible for choosing the reviewers and ultimately decides upon publication. This change, though, allows faster selection of appropriate reviewers and widens the knowledge base from which reviewers may derive. I expect that this change will also enhance review quality by improving the reviewer interest specificity.

Finally, our readers will benefit from these process changes as the increased rapidity of manuscript acceptance will lead to faster publication of the research findings. Another process we expect to initiate shortly will be electronic publication of manuscripts that are accepted for print publication, but are awaiting their final emergence due to the time restrictions inherent in typesetting and page limitations. Electronic

Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, 600 N. Wolfe Street, CMSC 210, Baltimore, MD, USA.

Address correspondence and reprint requests to Edward E. Lawson, MD, Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, 600 N. Wolfe Street, CMSC 210, Baltimore, MD 21287, USA.

availability of manuscripts before print publication will be only to subscribers of the *Journal*, a continuing advantage of AAP Perinatal Pediatrics Section membership, or of subscribing directly to the *Journal*.

Over the past year our main editorial objective was to improve the rapidity of review of manuscripts. Our objective was to increase the clinical value of our published manuscripts as authors recognized they would receive a rapid, fair, and responsive review. I believe we have accomplished this goal. Our most recent data

are that the mean time from initial receipt of a manuscript to first editorial decision regarding publication is between 50 and 60 days. While this represents an improvement over past performance, and is apparently a little better than our main competition for manuscripts, we are seeking to improve this record. NPG has invested considerable effort and expense into our Journal with this new electronic evaluation system. I believe we should be able to significantly reduce our review time yet more — That is a testable hypothesis! Results to follow!