

## EDITORIAL

Now that EYE is safely through her gestation, and modestly taking her place as the youngest and briefest of titles in that formidable catalogue of medical journals, we can admit relief that the name we bestowed at the re-birth of our time-honoured Transactions has provoked little audible complaint, and some muted applause.

It was a happy quirk of history (at any rate for most of our readers) that the English language became our Universal Tongue. 'Eye' is so shapely and concise a word (the simple Chaucerian 'Ye' was even conciser!) when we might have been landed with its equivalent in, say, Kiribati ('Te-bai-n-noria'). Even 'Ophthalmos' is rather a mis-spellable mouthful. For once the Latins did better than the Greeks, giving us the nicely rounded name 'Oculist' as our international label, until the 'enlightenment', when everything was hellenised, and we were clumsily dubbed 'ophthalmologists' instead; meanwhile others had invented the word 'cataract' for what our English forebears had (until then) lightly referred to as a 'pinne' or a 'web'.

If only, with our Time-Machine, we could fly back two thousand years to reassure our linguistic forebears in the windswept Frisian Islands, on the edge of their known world, that the simple words they had fashioned would in time become immortal; or perhaps we could set our dial a few millennia further back, in order to comfort some Old Lithuanian in the gloom of those Pripet marshes, and to promise him (like Banquo's ghost) that his word for eye ('oq') and his other proto-Aryan grunts would one day dominate the whole civilised world.

And what luck too that our English language should have shaken off so soon all those agglutinatives, leaving us with a stock of wholesome monosyllables, served by an array of lively particles, to whose company selected Mediterranean polysyllables could then be admitted for emphasis or decoration.

I suppose most Editors, as they beat their breasts over the inroads of vogue words and rogue words (modality, parameter, situations, problems . . . our personal lists get longer every day), come to feel that the ultimate virtue in writing is concision, particularly when the paper grinds to a halt with a defiant retinue of co-authors. Alas some authors will never learn that, though weeding takes more time than sowing, it is just as important, if their message is ever to float blithely out of the morass of words, graphs and tables that they have planted. I like to think that the brevity and simplicity of our title will reinforce this message.

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