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## Editorial Comment

# An irresistible thirst for knowledge!

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Can our thirst for knowledge ever be quenched? Obviously and wonderfully no! Every year more and more meetings are organised and new journals appear almost as frequently – not it would appear in criticism of existing instruments of knowledge, but to satisfy the dissemination of an ever-increasing knowledge base concerning the causes and treatment of cancer. In the clinical arena it is clear that the increasing number of organ-based meetings is relevant to the increasing adoption of multidisciplinary practice around clinics for breast cancer patients, colorectal cancer, prostate cancer, and so on. The expanding number of such meetings challenges the organisers of large comprehensive meetings such as the European Cancer Conferences (ECCO) and ASCO meetings. Despite the sometimes voiced opinion that these meetings get too large, too confusing and unfocused for participants, the reality is that each year more and more people attend. It is incumbent on the organisers of such large meetings to constantly reappraise the relevance of their programmes in comparison with the more focused organ-based events. An analysis of the highly successful ECCO-13 meeting held in Paris between October 30th and November 3rd 2005 shows that one very popular part of the programme was the educational events. This is perhaps not surprising given that the development of electronic journalism has created such a wealth of information available both to trainees and the trained, that review-type lectures and “state of the art” teaching is found particularly helpful in order to give balance to the

information input for trainees, and to ensure up to date practice for those who are in clinical practice. The teaching lectures were very well attended during the Paris meeting and so were six workshops held to allow experts to discuss in public controversial issues with invited audience participation. These workshops covered such diverse areas as brain metastases, clinical applications of targeted radionuclide therapy, the management of primary central nervous system lymphoma, how to manage cancer in the elderly patient, and new issues in clinical trial methodology. The editors of *EJC* held a workshop on “the art of successful publication”. In forthcoming issues of *EJC* we will present papers summarising these workshops and in this issue we start with the *EJC*’s own editorial paper on how to publish successfully!

Before an interested and vocal audience, the editors of *EJC* described editorial policy and the specifics of handling submitted manuscripts from preliminary review by editors, to selection of referees, the reporting process to authors, particularly concerning revisions and scientific editing of accepted manuscripts. The question of why people publish in scientific journals is fairly uniformly understood – publications are the essential way by which scientists communicate, they are an ethical obligation where clinical trials are concerned, and of course they are measures of success influencing authors’ personal careers. Increasingly, the citation of papers and the impact factor of journals influence the academic and financial standing of research groups and universities. What is less

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well understood is the necessary approach to planning manuscripts before their submission. It is every editors' experience that a surprising number of manuscripts are submitted where the authors have clearly not read the "instructions to authors" specific to any one journal. It is of course frustrating that different journals set different detailed criteria particularly if your manuscript has to visit several journals en route to its final destination! Never the less, papers submitted that do not adhere to specific instructions have a much greater risk of failing than those that follow the required instruction. Good scientists will often plan a particular piece of research with publication in mind, and this can focus the conduct of research as well as improve the transmission of results to the widest possible audience. Potential authors are, therefore, encouraged not only to read the instructions but also to plan their publication as carefully as possible. At the ECCO Work-

shop one editor suggested that the importance of the title could not be over emphasised since it may indeed be the only part of the paper that is ever read! Interesting titles, clear messages, a thought not only to the target audience but the fatigue factor of editors and reviewers will definitely enhance the likelihood of acceptance.

Surprisingly, year on year there are more and more journals published and this reflects the increasing activity of cancer research around the globe. Currently *EJC* has to reject 80% of all submitted manuscripts and, therefore, anything that can improve the chances of being in the 20% that are accepted has got to be taken as sound advice. The down-side of giving all this advice is that the editors speaking at this workshop fully appreciated that successful communication of this message could only increase their workload in the years ahead!