

EDITORIAL

The first volume of the S.M.J. was published in March 1960. Dr. Gwee Ah Leng was its first editor and has been since for the last 12 years. Editing the journal almost single handed, his task was an arduous one. His editorials were frequently quoted by the lay press and other periodicals. His topics were usually of a controversial nature and therefore they were either a culmination of protracted discussions or they themselves sparked off heated arguments. The S.M.A. must record here a warm vote of thanks and gratitude to Dr. Gwee who has set an extremely high standard to our local journal.

At present, this journal is tastefully produced on 120-130 pages of art paper. Sixty to eighty of these consist of scientific papers. Out of the 2,500 copies printed, 950 copies are sent to members of the Singapore Medical Association, 1,250 to members of the Malayan Medical Association and 200 are despatched overseas. The latter category includes international libraries, Presidents of other medical associations and editors of other journals.

The new editor has decided to institute a few changes in the management and format of the journal. The editor will be assisted by six associate editors. These associate editors will form the main editorial board. They will formulate policies, decide on major changes and do the bulk of vetting of papers. Each article will be vetted by at least two referees. In addition, there will be an editorial advisory board, the members of which will be called upon from time to time to help in correcting scientific papers of their own specialty. They may also be called upon to write a leader or a review article.

The new editorial board has decided that the editorial need not be a constant feature in every issue. In its place a leading article may appear. The board feels that the S.M.A. newsletter, which is going to be a monthly issue, will cover all topics of medico-political interests. The board is also enthusiastic in receiving review articles in which a subject is consolidated in a short and succinct paper. This will be published at the end of the scientific papers.

In order that our authors are properly quoted and addressed internationally the board has decided that an author's name is registered in the form of the author's initials followed by his surname.

This will also ensure that he is properly indexed in the Index Medicus. The author's status or position and address will be printed at the bottom of the first page of his article. We have also decided to do away with degrees, as they are cumbersome and may be confused with the initials of the co-author.

The format of the scientific paper will be changed to the extent of having a synopsis of not more than 150 words to be placed at the beginning of the article. This replaces the usual summary at the end of the article. The synopsis must give the meat of the article and this precis must project to the reader the essentials of the scientific paper, without any redundant terms and vague statements.

Single case reports will be published in a separate section, and they should be short and concise. Long dissertations on world literature and signs and symptoms are not encouraged for single case reports. Discussions should be reduced to a minimum.

The editorial board also encourages correspondence on scientific matters especially on papers that have been published by the S.M.J. This section of the S.M.J. has not been exploited by our readers. The editor urges them to send in comments and criticisms.

In the past, books reviewed for the S.M.J. were allowed to be retained by the reviewer. As the S.M.A. is building a library of its own, these books reviewed will now be returned to the S.M.A. and kept in the S.M.A. library. The review submitted will be pasted in the book reviewed as well as being published in the S.M.J.

The prime purpose of a medical journal is to act as a platform where researchers in that country can voice their findings. The existence of this venue should stimulate further research and investigation. The journal must also encourage the younger doctors to publish their scientific observations, some of which are definitely worthwhile publishing, but they are not properly assembled and presented. The main task of the editorial board therefore is to separate the grain from the chaff, and help the author to process the grain into a palatable form.

K. K. Tan
Editor