

# Passing the torch

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*Editor-in-Chief*

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This issue is the first where I will be serving as Editor-in-Chief of *Medical Writing* (MEW). Elise Langdon-Neuner, Editor-in-Chief since 2004, will be stepping down. This is yet another step in the evolution of the journal.

For those of you unfamiliar with its history, MEW started life in 1993 as a newsletter produced by European chapter of the American Medical Writers Association, EMWA's predecessor. The newsletter was originally named *The AMWA Journal – Europe* and eventually became *The EMWA Newsletter* with the creation of EMWA in 1995. The newsletter continued to grow with EMWA, becoming *The Write Stuff* (TWS) in 1998 thanks to the creative energy and hard work of Barry Drees, its first Editor-in-Chief. Barry carried TWS through its adolescence, learning on the job about how to format and run a professional journal. (I can imagine that was a lot of fun but probably also pretty stressful.)

In a 2008 article summarizing the first 10 years of TWS, Barry says 'it was with immense satisfaction that I was able to pass the position on to Elise Langdon-Neuner in 2004 and to watch the incredible job she has done continuing to develop and expand TWS'.<sup>1</sup> Just looking at the covers of TWS in the online archive, you can see what he means: essentially alone, and through an enormous amount of volunteered time, Elise elevated the content and format of TWS, bringing the journal into a sort of early adulthood, giving the journal a professional look and feel. Over the last several years, Elise single-handedly managed almost all aspects of the journal. This year, she brought the journal into adulthood, with a transformation from TWS, a private journal limited to EMWA, to MEW, a fully professional, international journal.<sup>2</sup> Despite some growing pains during the transition, thanks to Elise, we are now ready for the next level of development.

During the last couple of years, in addition to growing and maturing the journal, Elise has prepared the child to leave the nest, that is, to pass

the editorship to the next generation. Elise has greatly simplified this by engaging a professional publisher, Maney Publishing, who is now handling production and publicity.

Although I am now officially Editor-in-Chief, Elise will continue until the end of 2012 as Associate Editor and in the future as Emeritus Editor to help ease me into the post. I am pretty sure that nobody (certainly not me) will again be able to dedicate as much time and effort to the journal as Elise did. Indeed, as the journal expands, there is no way that this can remain a one-person job. Accordingly, one of my first steps has been to create 'section editors' who will function semi-autonomously.

In addition, to help MEW expand beyond EMWA and become broader and truly international, I plan on seeking new contributors from both within and outside of EMWA – and not only from Europe. Also, I am seeking out new regular columns and articles on topics outside the traditional base of EMWA, such as medical journalism and writing for lay audiences; medical communication and medical education; writing for nurses; and veterinary medical writing. Finally, I am working with Maney Publishing to continue to streamline production and communication.

As noted by Keith Veitch, the first editor of *The EMWA Newsletter*, and re-emphasized by Barry Drees, 'an association of writers should be capable of producing a world-class journal, since it represents what we do for a living'.<sup>1</sup> Elise and the other editors before me have done a great job putting us in the right direction, and I plan to continue heading towards that goal.

## References

1. Drees B. The history of the write stuff: 10 years of bringing European medical writers together. *Write Stuff* 2008;17:4–8.
2. About the medical writing journal. *Medical Writing* 2012;21:3.