EDITORIAL

Contributions from the *European Respiratory Monograph*: a new series in the journal

M. Decramer*, A. Rossi[#]

The *European Respiratory Monograph* is an educational publication of the European Respiratory Society that started in 1995. Since 1995, 15 Monographs have been published on various topics including: Carcinoma of the lung, AIDS and the lung, Pneumonia, Tuberculosis, New diagnostic techniques in paediatric respiratory medicine, Clinical exercise testing, Management of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, Mechanical ventilation from intensive care to home care, Pulmonary endoscopy and biopsy techniques, Respiratory disorders during sleep, Occupational lung disease, Respiratory mechanics, Pulmonary rehabilitation, Interstitial lung diseases, and Respiratory epidemiology in Europe. An average of three Monographs per annum have been published for the last five years. These Monographs had 8–26 chapters and 22–55 authors per issue.

The Monographs provide an excellent state-of-the-art overview of a particular disease, a particular diagnostic or therapeutic technique or a particular field of interest. They are primarily targeted at residents in training and in that sense they are teaching publications, but also established chest physicians as well as academic physicians might find that the publications provide them with attractive updates on a particular area. Overall, the Monographs are highly appreciated and this is the case worldwide. This high perceived quality is, without question, related to the efforts of the authors who all worked hard to turn their chapters into real state of the art reviews and the huge efforts of the issue editors.

It is important to notice that the Monographs do not have an impact factor. Moreover, we are not planning to obtain an impact factor although we certainly could. This is related to the fact that the Monographs are meant to be a teaching publication primarily oriented towards postgraduate education either of residents or practicing physicians. Not having an impact factor allows us to avoid the conflict between didactic clarity or brevity and scientific impact or excellence. It is the policy of the Society's publications to designate to each of these publications a specific role. In this context we attempt to achieve high scientific impact with the

European Respiratory Journal. We believe that this strategic policy is important to achieve our goals with each of the Society's publications and that it is important that the different publications do not become mutually competitive. Similar definitions have been made for the role of the *European Respiratory Review*, *Buyer's guide*, *European Respiratory Topic* and the *Newsletter*. The definition of the respective roles will harmonize the Society's publication strategy.

Notwithstanding the clear description of the respective roles of the different publications, we felt that some of the contributions to the *European Respiratory Monograph* were of such high scientific level that they deserved a wider readership in the scientific community and a better forum for visibility. This is the prime reason why we started the series "Contributions from the *European Respiratory Monograph*" in the present issue of the Journal. The first contribution is the one by S. Baldacci *et al.* on "Allergy markers in respiratory epidemiology" [1]. From this issue onwards, we will have such a contribution each month. We hope that this series will contribute to more widespread attention to the really outstanding chapters of the Monographs. In addition, we hope that the reader of the Journal will appreciate these as excellent review articles.

Although the prime mission of the Journal remains the publication of excellent original articles, it is clear that for a good scientific journal, reviews are important too. Indeed, reviews serve different important functions in the scientific community. For the researcher starting to discover a new field, balanced reviews are an excellent way of introduction. The clinician will find that reviews contain information in a much more condensed fashion compared to original articles, which he cannot afford to read because of time constraints. As the number of scientific papers increases from year to year, this factor is likely to become more and more important. Besides condensing the information, a review written by an expert in the field, who is familiar with the relative importance of findings and studies, also provides balanced information that cannot be obtained in another way. Although this balance may involve some personal touch as emotion, bias, subjective attitudes and personal appreciation, this merely adds a touch of colour to the balance. In addition, as reviews are often read and cited they also constitute an exquisite way to diffuse scientific data. Without reviews many original articles may be lost in the vast flood of scientific data currently being published.

*Respiratory Division, University Hospitals, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium and [#]Pulmonary Unit, Bergamo General Hospital, Bergamo, Italy.

Correspondence: M. Decramer, Respiratory Division, University Hospital Gasthuisberg, Herestraat 49, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium. Fax: 32 16346803.

Finally, we are currently working on the development of on-line distribution of the Monographs as this would allow to have the issues earlier, exploit the contents more fully, and achieve a wider distribution of these excellent publications. In addition, we are planning to publish the Monographs in book format in a joint effort with an external publishing company. This will bring the Monographs to the bookstore. We anticipate that these changes will be operational by the

end of the year. We clearly hope that all these changes will eventually give these wonderful books all the attention they so rightfully deserve.

References

1. Baldacci S. Allergy markers in respiratory epidemiology. *Eur Respir J* 2001; 17: 773–790.