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Our best wishes to all our readers for a happy and successful 1991, which starts the 3rd decade of Ophthalmic Research. We are grateful for the support of our subscribers and the authors. We would also like to thank the staff of S. Karger for their support.

There are some improvements which we would like to achieve in the future, and take this seasonal opportunity to encourage good ‘New Year’s resolutions’.

An increasing number of journals require authors to include ‘confidence limits’ with the bald figures from statistical tests (and their p values). The latter may seem to imply the existence of hurdles with fixed heights, which is inconsistent with the philosophy of statistics. Accordingly, we ask our authors to take the added trouble to include confidence limits. Another basic statistical principle is that each observation in a series should be as independent as possible of all others. The practical implication in ophthalmology is that only one eye, randomly chosen, should be included in a statistical analysis [1]. An average result from the two eyes (considered as only one observation, i.e., contributing only one degree of freedom) would be often acceptable, provided that the right and left are correlated, but there is a small risk of an artefactual reduction in the variance.

Some considerations in relation to cataracts will attract strong editorial preference. Because ‘inherited cataract’ or ‘senile cataract’ are not single entities, subclassification may be very useful and in some instances even a prerequisite. Observations of the extent and location of opacities, preferably documented by objective methods including imaging, are often of great help in understanding the problems raised. In analogy, biochemical analysis of lenses should be carried out if necessary and possible on defined parts or single layers of the lens.

 Occasionally a paper is accepted with some reservation because invasive procedures have been done on both eyes of experimental animals. Readers may have noted other infringements. We would urge researchers involved in animal experiments to use only one eye if at all possible [see Handbook for the Use of Animals, ARVO, August 1990].

The range and rate of advances made not only in ophthalmology are a great contribution to ‘science’. The exponential growth in publications and even journals is inspiring, but imposes various burdens on the research community. The citing of every remotely relevant reference seems unnecessary in most contexts, and we suggest that selection is desirable. However, the originator of a new idea should be recognized, no matter how long ago his original publication appeared.

Another burden, but a very pleasant and rewarding one, is that we have to read more and more papers and journals, no matter how much we compensate by super-specialization – perhaps even because we dig more deeply into a restricted area. To assist the voracious enquiring minds scanning the journals late at night, and in airplanes and trains, we would make a plea for an improvement in the abstracts. Writing these is a difficult art. Do not waste space by expanding the title (which nowadays is usually highly informative, though long). Giving the reader the results and conclusions is more important than detail about experimental methods, although these should be briefly indicated. Do not waste time and space by saying that, for example, ‘the reasons are discussed’, instead, present what you think is the main reason.

In the same vein, a follow-up paper often refers the reader to a previous publication for experimental method, and without that information the paper is unintelligible to a new reader. A very brief account of, say, the experimental method is required to allow a follow-up paper to be
free-standing. Similarly, graphs and pictures should have explanatory captions which allow them to be understood without reference to the text of a paper.

Authorship is also a cause of concern. A byproduct of super-specialization is the need for collaboration. The trend for basic scientists to work with clinicians is admirable and to be encouraged. The discrimination between technician and scientist is decreasingly valid. We are less sympathetic to the insistence of some heads of departments that their names appear as co-author of all papers from that department. Conversely, we are not sympathetic to the inclusion of individuals who have done very little, none of it creation – commendable enough – has been to encourage a junior member of the staff. The originator of the new idea, if significant, is the one most deserving of recognition, of course.

Culliton [2] quotes a passage from an impending product, ‘Guidelines for the conduct of research’, at the National Institutes of Health, USA: ‘... authorship is a privilege that belongs to those who make a significant contribution to the conceptualization, design, execution, and/or interpretation of the research study’.

The native English-speaking members of our editorial board are generous of their time and trouble in amending some papers to conform with standard usage. These editors often comment on the excellence of the English used by ‘foreigners’, often more grammatical than the language used by some natives, and are very sympathetic to those who are struggling. However, efficiency would be improved and delays in publication reduced if non-English authors could recruit English or American friends who are fully conversant with their subject to idiomatize their efforts before submission.

We look forward to your papers in the future and will publish them expeditiously. The time between receipt of a paper and its acceptance would be shortened if authors would keep in mind the points raised in this editorial. We encourage suggestions for improving our journal, as science progresses.

References
Culliton BJ: The ideal scientist described. Science