Recently, the editors of *ORL Nova* have decided to broaden the scope of the journal in order to better expose the different opinions regarding currently controversial issues in clinical otolaryngology. Recognized experts known to uphold a specific point of view are selected for their first-hand knowledge of a chosen topic and invited to each prepare a manuscript, which is then submitted for comments to the other authors. All the commentaries are published along with the invited papers.

This firts issue of ‘Controversies in ORL’ is devoted to ‘Otitis media in Children’. Numerous studies on otitis media have been published. However, experts still disagree on many aspects of the disease. In an attempt to increase the level of evidence that each individual report may reach, several meta-analyses of published data have recently been performed. Meta-analysis is a review of reports sharing common criteria that are systematically evaluated on the basis of a predefined protocol using statistical methods. Even though this technique is designed to reduce bias and subjectivity, often results and conclusions remain controversial and a source of confusion for the readers. As an example, a meta-analysis by Rosenfeld and Post [1] showed that antibiotics have a ‘clinically and statistically significant impact on the resolution of otitis media with effusion’. However, a reanalysis of many of the same studies by Williams et al. [2] brought somewhat different conclusions.

Some of the discrepancies may result from the data analysis during the clinical study. This is well illustrated by what is known as the Cantekin affair [3]. This controversy also demonstrates the importance of the discrepancy in opinion that may exist between renowned experts. Charles D. Bluestone, MD, and Erdem I. Cantekin, PhD, together conducted a study on the efficiency of amoxicillin in the treatment of otitis media with effusion. Following data analysis, they reached opposite conclusions. Bluestone’s evaluation showed that amoxicillin was efficient [4] while the analysis and interpretation of the same data by Cantekin et al. [5] brought the opposite conclusion. Finally, it appeared that Bluestone’s evaluation of the data suffered from ‘various methodologic weakness and lack of objectivity’ [3]. Because we thought it would be of particular interest for the readers of *ORL Nova* to know the two opinions more than 10 years after the affair, both protagonists were invited to prepare a manuscript for this issue of the journal. Unfortunately, only Cantekin accepted the invitation. Bluestone’s opinion on otitis media is probably known to most readers. Therefore, in spite of the fact that he declined to participate in the debate, we hope this issue of *ORL Nova* will help the readers, ENT specialists, pediatricians and general practitioners concerned with the treatment of otitis media to understand why the conclusions of reports they may have read in the many journals of our specialty are still controversial.

We expect that some of the opinions expressed in this issue will raise additional comments among readers. These comments will be published in the next issue of *ORL Nova*. We hope to open a debate which will be an exciting intellectual venue for our field.
References