

Editorial

After 15 volumes and one issue we felt that the time had come to have a change of the cover of the *International Journal of Risk and Safety in Medicine*. The rather austere design of the early nineties wasn't so functional anymore. We wanted something more bright and cheerful.

Both Graham and I had the idea of using hands on the cover, one way or the other. Not that hands can be considered as an icon for medicine but we felt that there are many implicit and explicit associations. Some people overrate the power of medicine as if doctors are extensions of the hands of God, and thus modern reincarnations of the Greek healing God Asklepios, the teacher of Hippocrates. We are not among those. But it cannot be denied that patients put all their faith in "the hands of the doctor". "Healing hands" is not only an expression used for some unorthodox ways of treating patients but deep in our hearts we hope and feel that all doctors are in the possession of them. Lancets are yielded by doctor's hands and prescriptions are written by them. In short, ultimately all the potential good and harm of medicine reaches us via the hands of health professionals.

Not only the artwork of the cover but also its information has been altered. Of course the title remained the same but there are some changes of the subtitles. We no longer refer to Side Effects of Drugs. The main reason for that is that in recent years it has become clear that adverse drug reactions are only part of the harm that can be caused by drugs. There are reasons to believe that these ADR's constitute even a minor part of that harm and that e.g. medication errors and prescription errors are far more important. Instead of Side Effects of Drugs we now mention Pharmacovigilance. Although the early detection of adverse events is still an important purpose of pharmacovigilance it is not the only one. More and more it is realized that pharmacovigilance can and should cover more. It has also to do with failure of efficacy. It can play a role in the battle against counterfeit drugs and there are many more examples that can be used to illustrate the importance of pharmacovigilance for the improvement of the balance between risk and safety in medicine.

The attention of many governments and also of WHO has become increasingly focussed on patient safety, not in the least because of the huge financial consequences involved. In view of the fact that patient safety has become such an important issue in modern medicine we were of the opinion that, while the word safety already features in the main title, it would be good to repeat it in one of the subtitles. Patient safety is at the centre of what this journal is all about. Having mentioned similar interests of this journal and WHO and having several new board members who are employees of this organisation, we are more than pleased to announce here that we have, together with WHO, the intention of regularly devoting some pages in every future issue to what we shall simply call *WHO News*. A close collaboration with WHO underlines both the international character of the journal and the subject matter we want to cover.

And then, it is now time to thank the board members who have left us. We are deeply grateful for the time and efforts they have devoted to our journal and for the interest they have shown in helping to create a periodical which is rather unique in not only publishing science but also important Public Health issues. That multiplicity did not always make life easy for the editorial board. Again, these board members earned our special gratitude and we look forward to their continuing support.

Finally I would like to welcome the new board members and express my hope for a very fruitful collaboration.

Chris J. van Boxtel
Editor