

## 'The fragrance always stays in the hand that gives the rose'

Academic journals play a crucial role in informing clinicians, guiding practice, driving research and ultimately shaping patient care. In order to do this effectively, journals rely on a body of, often overworked and underappreciated, clinicians and academics. Today I wish to acknowledge the work of our peer reviewers and thank them for their constructive, considered comments and the helpful advice they have offered to authors and the journal over the years. A list of our current peer reviewers is on page 43. I am also aware of the many others who have supported Physiotherapy Ireland before my time as Editor. To all, my thanks for your help and continued support.

Peer reviewing is one of the fundamentals of the scientific process; it is core to academic publishing and research grant allocation. The peer review process ensures that published work is submitted to a 'vigorous process of analysis and criticism from learned colleagues'.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of peer review is to make sure that journals publish work of the best possible quality and that it is 'fair and true'. Peer review also gives some level of objectivity to the decision making process for editors; however, peer review is not without criticism.<sup>2</sup> Concerns have been raised about the reliability of the process, reviewer bias, and the competence of reviewers.<sup>2</sup> It has been said<sup>3</sup> that a stark example of the failure of the peer review process is the saga of the MMR (mumps measles and rubella) vaccine. You will recall, The Lancet published a paper by Dr Andrew Wakefield and colleagues raising the possibility of a link between the MMR vaccine, an unusual bowel condition and autism.<sup>4</sup> The paper generated much public alarm and debate that continues today. However, the paper was subsequently retracted by The Lancet and last month Dr Wakefield was struck off the British medical register after the General Medical Council found that he was guilty of serious professional misconduct in the conduct and reporting of his research.<sup>5</sup>

There are other examples, perhaps not so dramatic, where the peer review process is less than ideal; however, it is generally acknowledged that the external peer review system is the best currently available to editors. The system expands the expertise available to editors, assists authors to improve the quality of their manuscripts and is essentially a quality assurance system for a journal.<sup>6</sup> It should be remembered that this selfless and often demanding task is all done on a voluntary basis.

Another example of the generosity of colleagues is evident from our International Editorial Board; this group of esteemed colleagues from around the world, with our Statistical Consultant, have agreed to help support and guide Physiotherapy Ireland as the journal develops and moves forward in the coming years. Again, my thanks to these colleagues—I am constantly amazed at the open-handedness and selfless generosity of the research community.

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