



## EDITORIAL

# Letters to the Editor: Like a rolling stone?

## Cartas ao editor: Like a rolling stone? ☆

Once upon a time you dressed so fine,  
Threw the bums a dime in your prime, didn't you ?  
People'd call, say, "Beware doll, you're bound to fall,"  
You thought they were all a'kiddin' you.  
You used to laugh about  
Everybody that was hangin' out.  
Now you don't talk so loud,  
Now you don't seem so proud,  
About having to be scrounging your next meal.

How does it feel?  
How does it feel?  
To be without a home?  
Like a complete unknown?  
Like a rolling stone?

**Bob Dylan, 1965**

It has been one year and a half since we took editorial responsibilities for Portuguese Journal of Pulmonology (PJP). One of our aims was to be able to make a decision about a manuscript in 40 days.<sup>1</sup> Analysing one year of editorial work through the Elsevier EES Platform we are very glad that we have made it... In fact from the 147 manuscripts received between the 15 October 2010 and 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011 the time from submission to first decision has been 34.1 days and after receiving the revision from the authors the average time to final decision was 33.7 days. Apart from the Editorial Board, external reviewers, authors we want also to thank RPP technical editorial team in Barcelona, for their professionalism and back-up.

By the time we are writing this we will have published 7 issues with Elsevier, and 4 supplements with congress abstracts. We have published manuscripts addressing various pertinent topics in respiratory medicine, including reviews by well-known authors, but we have noticed we need more commentaries and letters to the Editor. One letter in 18 months is not enough!

## Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor is the correspondence between researchers through Editors. They offer not only an open forum but contribute to the validation of research.<sup>2</sup> They present an opportunity for the researcher to react almost in real time, expressing his argument according with data he is still working on or highlighting his own published research that contradicts the other authors' data. Irony and humour are features that may accompany Letters to the Editor, but this should be done in a polite and politically correct manner!

According with a survey in a community of French biomedical scientists, 84% of readers do regularly read Letters to the Editor as a way to be informed about hot topics in their respective fields.<sup>2</sup>

Although some claim that letters are less difficult to get accepted than original articles, they always depend on the opportunity and the opinion of the Editors. This may be not as accurate as the acceptance criteria for the original articles...

Correspondence is not usually peer-reviewed and normally the journal invites replies from the authors of the original publication.

## Structure of a letter

The correspondence to a medical journal as an «open letter» typically starts with «Dear Sir» or «Sir». It is recommended that the authors include a title where they specify what they are referring to (we suggest they write «regarding the article entitled...»). Although not always the structure of a letter develop from 1) an opening sentence recalling the contested published results, 2) a second presenting the questioned issue, 3) a third developing the arguments backed by the author's own research and 4) a concluding remark to reconsider the initial findings. The reply of the authors may follow the same structure and may begin with «Response to the letter to the Editor: regarding the article entitled...»

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By bringing new thoughts, new paths to explore letters can play an important role among the scientific community.

### In this number

In this issue, we publish the first editorial pro and con, related with the role of indacaterol in COPD.<sup>3,4</sup> This was one of the aims to implement in RPP in order to promote the discussion about relevant issues that are controversy. In the next editions other respiratory issues will be submitted to debate. We have also two papers dedicated to different aspects related with sleep disordered breathing,<sup>5,6</sup> that provoked an elegant editorial by J. Moutinho dos Santos.<sup>7</sup> A new review series has also begun, this time related with the topic of bronchoscopy, more precisely with the issue about the evaluation of the patient undergoing bronchoscopy, by A. Magalhães.<sup>8</sup> This review series follows the SPP Pneumology School activities as an editorial policy decided together by the PSP direction and RPP editors at the beginning of their function.

We hope to convince you that submitting a manuscript or a letter is worth your time. It is about time that your colleagues and more importantly you current or future employers value your effort!

It has been one year and a half since we took editorial responsibilities and we have testified some important changes and quality improvement and like Bob Dylan we feel it is time that your publications won't be «like a rolling stone».

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