

Editorial

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THE ETHICS OF PUBLISHING

We are delighted to present to you the second issue of *The British Student Doctor*. In the six months since our launch at the end of January, we have received many high-quality submissions and great interest from medical students across the country to become peer reviewers. This enthusiasm for the project is very encouraging, and demonstrates the importance of providing this platform to medical students to develop their knowledge and skills in evidence-based medicine.

In this second issue, we are publishing our first piece of original research. In *'Epidemiology and outcomes of advanced necrotising enterocolitis'*, Charlotte Maden, a fourth year medical student at Cardiff University, investigates factors associated with this serious paediatric illness, and how these affect methods of management and mortality outcomes. Necrotising enterocolitis is a common emergency condition affecting neonates, which can have life threatening implications. This study could offer a valuable contribution for the management of this severe disease, both locally and internationally.

In the *Reflections* section of the journal, Aadil Sheikh, a student at the University of Birmingham, describes his experiences of attempting a medical elective in Israel. He intended to explore the health implications of the polarising conflict between Israel and Palestine, for Israeli Arabs, Palestinians of Jerusalem, and patients referred from the West Bank and Gaza. He argues that, through its altruistic values, medicine can be a *"bridge for peace"*, bringing together Israelis and Palestinians for the mutual goal of improving healthcare.

We are also pleased to publish an editorial on *"Why mindfulness matters in medical education"* by Dr Craig Hassed, an Associate Professor of the Department of General Practice at Monash University in Australia. He has been instrumental in the introduction of innovative training methods into medical training and has authored 10 books on this subject; as well as featuring regularly in the media to speak on holistic medicine and medical ethics. Equipping medical students with the appropriate life skills to maintain their wellbeing is an area of huge interest globally. The strengthening evidence base of mindfulness is proving its value as a vital tool in the training of both students and doctors.

The final article in this issue of *The British Student Doctor*, is a response from Professor Kamila Hawthorne, Vice-Chair (Professional Development) of the Royal College of General Practitioners and Chris Bull, to the article published in our last issue by Dr Peter Edwards, *"Why I am pursuing a career in general practice"*. This is the first article of correspondence that we are publishing in the journal, and we hope to encourage more responses in the future, as discourse is vital for the scientific process. This point is discussed in more depth by our *Correspondence* Section Editors in their editorial *"Conversation is essential in publishing"*.

After the hard work of putting a manuscript through the peer review process, for both

editor and authors, it is highly rewarding to see the final article in print. However, publication is the culmination of the diligence of all those involved in the editorial process. If there is misconduct at any stage during this process, then the result is a breakdown of trust in the scientific method. Probity is a core value that the General Medical Council expects from all medical students as future doctors. As it states in *Good Medical Practice* (2013): “You must be honest in financial and commercial dealings with patients, employers, insurers and other organisations or individuals”. (1)

A particular, but repeated concern, that we have faced during the development of this issue, is the submission then subsequent withdrawal of manuscripts made to the journal. This is a serious issue, as each submission that we receive to *The British Student Doctor* is reviewed by two external reviewers, two Section Editors, two Editors-in-Chief and a member of the journal’s faculty board. This editorial work is provided voluntarily without financial recompense, in order to further evidence-based medicine. Therefore, submitting a manuscript to the journal without the good intention of accepting an offer for publication, is an unacceptable waste of editorial resources. It is also unethical to submit a manuscript to multiple journals simultaneously, or to publish multiple similar articles, otherwise known as “*salami-slicing*”. When an author submits a manuscript to *The British Student Doctor*, they are entering into a contractual agreement that assigns the copyright for the work to the journal for the purposes of publication. It is unacceptable to break this contract without sufficient reason.

In any case of suspected academic misconduct, the policy of *The British Student Doctor* is to follow the Committee on Publication Ethics’ (COPE) guidelines. The first stage is to request an explanation from the authors, and if this explanation is unsatisfactory, then further action may include contacting the respective institution or employer of the individuals involved. (2)

Whilst this has been a serious issue that we have faced, it is also important to note that the majority of authors have conducted themselves in a highly professional manner. The diligence and professionalism of all those involved in the publication process is a requisite for high-quality scientific research and academic debate.

Ultimately, developing a solid foundation of publication ethics at an early stage, will contribute to professionalism in all aspects of your career, including as future clinicians. Most importantly, probity, transparency and reliability, are vital for safe patient care.

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