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Biomedical peer review

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Since the late of the 17th century it has been customary for new research findings to be discussed critically before publication. This system of evaluation of the manuscripts submitted to publication - peer review - is now the only recognized means guaranteeing that only good science appears in public.

Peer review is an essential component of publishing. Editors of the scientific journals make decisions about publication on their own, but the advices of reviewers influence these decisions to a great extent (1). Therefore, an important and critical responsibility of editors is to identify persons possessing high degree of both expertise and integrity. Few attempts to identify the characteristics of good reviewers found that the best quality reports had been provided by persons of the junior academic status working at top academic institutions, but having considerable refereeing experience (2). The recruitment of such experts is a matter of great concern of any scientific journal.

Reviewing is a responsible job. Although it is difficult, time-consuming, delicate and usually unrewarded, responsible reviewers perform it thoroughly, fairly and objectively. However, we still know very little about cognitive aspect of reviewing, and even less about the technique the reviewers practice when reviewing. On the other hand, the reviewers, especially the less experienced ones, may be unaware of many caveats they may face when reviewing. Because of this, all peer-reviewed journals are obliged to promote research integrity by developing and publishing policies, procedures, guidelines or requirements on review of manuscripts (3). Moreover, several peer-reviewed journals also train their reviewers to do the job in professional manner (4); in other words, scientific journals try to teach new reviewers how to do their trade. By organizing a meeting with its potential reviewers, and by publishing several lectures given on this occasion (this issue), the editorial board of Archive of Oncology adjoins such initiatives. It is

hoped that such an approach might considerably improve the publication enterprise. Our journal thus meets some of the requirements of Good editorial practice, to which it is committed and strictly adhered (5-7). The only goal of this is to ensure that the science reported in the biomedical literature is of the highest quality, which is an obligation of all scientists (8).

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Symposium on Manuscript Peer Reviewing in Biomedical Journals (Archive of Oncology) was organized by Institute of Oncology Sremska Kamenica - Archive of Oncology, and held in Sremska Kamenica, May 24, 2002. In this issue selected extended abstracts on the most important topics are published.

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