From the editor

First steps...

This edition of *Clinical Medicine* is the first in which I appear as editor. I have played no part in its content, and indeed for the rest of the year the journal will continue to have the fingerprints of Robert Allan, the departing editor, all over it. Which is all to the good. Robert has been an exemplary editor, and the journal has evolved during his tenure, notably by broadening its appeal and, in particular, by enhancing its topicality. The professional arena in which the NHS functions, undergoing a more than usually frenzied period of reassessment and (dare one say) reorganisation, is a subject of key interest to the majority of the members and fellows of the Royal College of Physicians (RCP). The journal's coverage of this area, under the rubric of professional affairs, is now almost required reading for UK physicians. This development has occurred while the traditional wide-ranging content of the journal, from original papers to continuous medical education, from audit to book review, has continued. The journal owes Robert a great debt of gratitude, while I face the familiar challenge of following a hard act!

Clinical Medicine is a hybrid. It covers areas that are, appropriately, relatively specific to its key readers and subscribers, the fellows and collegiate members, such as the articles already mentioned on clinical practice and the NHS. However the journal also effectively addresses 'all stations north' – articles ranging from

ethics to international affairs. This broad remit presents various dilemmas, of which not the least is how the editorial team can judge the success of the journal. The true touchstone of any successful journal must be how many people read it – an extraordinarily difficult thing to assess accurately. One approach is to seek feedback: so, particularly from next year when the contents will date from the time of my editorship, all comments will be gratefully received, and the most plangent may well get published! An allied approach is to invite suggestions for content – which need not wait till next year. Finally some forms of readership survey can help – and if we do inflict one on you, please reply.

I had hoped to start this editorial with a resounding editorial manifesto – or at least reflect meaningfully on the role of an editor. Seeking to create a fully researched contribution, rather than merely promulgate my personal view, I came across 'An editor: someone who separates the wheat from the chaff and then prints the chaff'.¹ That will clearly not be in Robert Allan's encomium, and I shall try hard to ensure it will not be in mine.

Reference

- 1 Attr. Adlai Stevenson, defeated twice for the US presidency v President Eisenhower. There are other attributions.

Humphrey Hodgson

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