Editorial

East meets West. Whither our orthopaedic journals?

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I have the privilege of serving 2 excellent orthopaedic journals, namely The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery, British edition (JBJS) and the Journal of Orthopaedic Surgery (JOS). The former is a well-established old bird; the latter much younger. Both are flying high, largely through the commitment and enthusiasm of those who work for them. Their respective websites—www.jbjs.org.uk and www.josonline.org—show their activities and strengths.

The JBJS is an autonomous charity with a traditional worldwide readership and subscribers. It is wholly independent of The British Orthopaedic Association (BOA), whose membership benefits include subscription of JBJS at a discounted rate. The journal also serves as the publishing arm of the European Federation of National Associations of Orthopaedics and Traumatology and facilitates worldwide readership through the establishment of overseas editions, already in South America and more recently in India. For JOS, it has become part of the Asia Pacific Orthopaedic Association (APOA) and a vehicle not only for the scientific achievements of its potentially huge membership, but also contributions worldwide.

With this apparent geographical polarisation, it might be tempting to view the 2 journals as competitors. I think this would be unwise, partly because of established traditions and practices, and also because of the globalisation of scientific literature and recent initiatives made available through the internet. Moreover, the aspirations of individual countries, especially India and China, need to be considered. The Indian sub-continent, while wishing to maintain its traditional links with Britain, is further developing its own excellent Indian Journal of Orthopaedics with help from JBJS. India is also a member of APOA and will host its next congress in Delhi. Also, JBJS is especially supportive of developments in China through increasing numbers of Chinese reviewers and submissions.

These various allegiances may appear confusing but they should not be. The bottom line is that orthopaedic knowledge needs to be shared worldwide and published in journals of good reputation. It was reassuring that the introduction of the Indian edition of JBJS, far from being a threat to the Indian Journal of Orthopaedics, resulted in increased cooperation and goodwill. It can only be healthy to see eastern authors appearing in the JBJS and contributions from the West in the JOS, along with fierce competition to be published in either. This is reflected in increasing submissions to both. It is also healthy to see how electronic publishing and the internet have streamlined the process between submission and publication. It is now possible to draw widely on reviewers and involve many more in the process, thereby sharing the load and introducing young surgeons to medical writing early in their careers. This will reinforce the message that desktop publishing and the internet are tools but no substitute for good scholarship and editing skills.

So, in practical terms, how do we move things forward? Firstly, our respective editors should be inclusive, bringing as many as possible, especially younger surgeons, into the workings of their journals. Secondly, the contents of JBJS, JOS, and the Indian...
Journal of Orthopaedics could be reciprocally available through website links. Thirdly, there should be membership benefits to the BOA, APOA, and Indian Orthopaedic Association in the form of discounted or free subscriptions to all 3 journals, particularly online. The JBJS is already in the process of offering a special discounted rate to all members of the Indian Orthopaedic Association. All this activity is likely to increase sponsorship and advertising revenue for our mutual benefit.

We are in a privileged position of huge activity and development of our specialty worldwide. It is surely the right time to bring our eastern and western journals closer together.