

## Editorial

### Author's editors and effective scientific communication

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EASE membership is highly diverse, but many of us are author's editors, helping researchers improve their manuscripts either before submission or after one or more rounds of peer review. This profession, although not involved in decision making, plays an important role in scientific communication. In this issue of our journal you can read a review of Valerie Matarese's book<sup>1</sup> on the work of author's editors, so I will focus here on some aspects that are not discussed in the review or only briefly mentioned.

Author's editors are usually not employed by any institution but self-employed, working from home. This is particularly advantageous for those who live in the countryside and/or take care of elderly relatives or small children. Nevertheless, working from home requires discipline and good organisation, so that the work-life balance is maintained.

In Poland, where I live, and probably in many other non-Anglophone countries, this profession is not well established. Scientists who are not proficient in English usually ask translators or English teachers to proofread their manuscripts before submission. If the language professional has a scientific background (like me), then he/she will be able to improve not only the language but also the structure and logical coherence of the text, thus playing the role of an author's editor. However, many translators have no scientific background, so they correct minor mistakes concerning spelling or grammar, but are likely to overlook major defects, such as a laconic abstract, an inadequate description of research methods, or a lack of conclusions at the end of the manuscript. Consequently, manuscripts checked by them are often desk-rejected by journal editors.

To aid in solving this problem, in 2010 we first published *EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators of Scientific Articles*<sup>2</sup>, which briefly explain the major editorial recommendations and ethical issues related to scientific publishing: authorship, acceptable secondary publication, avoidance of plagiarism, etc. Since then, this document has been updated annually and translated by volunteers into more than 20 languages: Arabic, Bangla, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Estonian, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Polish, Portuguese (Brazilian), Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Turkish, and Vietnamese. Initially it was an independent publication, but the last edition (November 2016) was published as an e-only article in our journal<sup>3</sup>. All the language versions are freely available on our website. Thanks to this, scientists who are not fluent in English can now understand more easily the expectations of journal editors and consequently write better manuscripts. This saves time for both the editors and researchers, as the whole publishing process is facilitated and the exchange and interpretation of results is more effective.

Unfortunately, many scientists and translators are still

unaware of international editorial recommendations, so we need to promote EASE Guidelines actively among our colleagues. Journal editors could help this promotion by including in their instructions for authors a formula like:

Before submission, follow EASE Guidelines for Authors and Translators, freely available at [www.ease.org.uk/publications/author-guidelines](http://www.ease.org.uk/publications/author-guidelines) in many languages. Adherence should increase the chances of acceptance of submitted manuscripts.

Science translators and author's editors can also refer to EASE Guidelines, especially if their clients are not convinced that changes suggested in the structure or style of their manuscripts are truly needed. In many languages very complicated sentence structure, haziness, and excessive referencing are perfectly acceptable in scientific texts<sup>4,5</sup>, so scientists must understand that they need to meet the standards of scientific writing in English when presenting their research results in this language.

Obviously, the assistance of an author's editor is beneficial not only before submission but also after peer review. In non-Anglophone countries this often helps scientists respond to the comments of editors and peer reviewers, so final acceptance for publication is more probable, and the work of researchers and editors is not wasted.

Unfortunately, the important contribution of an author's editor to scientific communication is often not acknowledged in the manuscript, in spite of international recommendations<sup>3,6</sup>. I hope that in the future their work will be more respected and appreciated by the scientific community.

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