The Regimental Headquarters of the Royal Army Medical Corps, in the booklet on Charities and Organisations, says of the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps:—

'Founded in 1903 to publish among other things, (1) original articles written by officers of the RAMC and others, (2) bibliographical notes on articles of importance and interest to the military services, (3) reprints and translations from military, medical and other journals, (4) official gazettes and official information generally bearing upon the Army Medical Services'. This outline has changed little but much information from gazettes and other official sources is now published in the Army Medical Services Magazine. The aim remains to record the professional work of the RAMC and to inform the readership on matters of a military medical nature'.

The fulfilment of this aim is critically dependent on authors. The response in the last 12 months has been magnificent. The 70 or so articles we received are enough to fill our Journal twice over at the present rate of publication and 3 times over at the rate of 5 years ago. But not all of these will make it. In fact, between a quarter and a fifth will not. Recently some have failed because they lacked either original data of original insights or even competence as informative reviews; some have lacked comprehensibility or coherence or have been contradictory and inconsistent; some put forward statements or arguments which were simply unsustainable on the basis of the data or citations offered. (We hope that readers will agree that this dismal catalogue of failings does not apply to the majority which we do publish). Others had no military relevance, even on the basis of the need to keep those caring for Services families in peacetime alert to some important aspect of medical practice. Happily some in this last group have subsequently been published elsewhere.

It is a long and arduous road from conception to publication. It is tempting for an author to cut corners by not subjecting his paper to the rigorous criticisms required from his colleagues, Consultants, Tutors, Advisers or Directors, and not going through the consequent rewrites. Even when all this is done, the Editor comes back after what seems like ages with pettifogging points and requests for clarification, and that perhaps is when an author's patience is tried.

However, the Editor's aim is to publish if possible, in a modified form where necessary, and to this end he is helped by a range of referees including some who are national authorities in their particular field. It is never comfortable to have the gaps in one's reading, the shortcomings of one's wording or the flaws in one's argument pointed out. And yet some authors have responded to the challenge with yet another rewrite occasionally with the help of senior colleagues, and come through with flying colours. The more the work can be refined, however, before submission, the less painful is the process of polishing it afterwards.

Public Relations (Army) also have a policy of allowing publications where possible, if necessary with amendment. Rarely an article is stopped because it treads on a particularly inflamed political corn, but the Journal itself welcomes controversy and criticism on military medical matters. The authors' views are their own and are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Medical Directorate. There is often room for divergent views within the one issue of the Journal.

We have published a few articles, of military medical relevance, by overseas authors. One or two have been accepted from RAF doctors (who do not have a Journal of their own but may subscribe to ours). Publication of RAMC authors has not been delayed thereby. Such delays as there are relate to the amount of editorial work required on an article. One that is lucidly written, scientifically sound and of obvious military medical interest will whistle through. The Editor is grateful for a number of these because it enables him to devote time to those that need more editorial work. The more there are of the latter, the slower the whole editorial process becomes and the longer the delays suffered by all authors.

What do you think of the new format of the Journal? We want your Journal to be something you will be pleased to have and proud to publish in. We still need to attract authors with the talent, loyalty and determination to have their work published in the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps. We may now have more authors competing for publication but there are also more journals competing for authors. Potential authors should remember that, although we hold the copyright, we do give permission in appropriate cases for republication in other journals, and it is possible, having studied a particular subject, to write more than one article for more than one journal. Ultimately, though, the aims of the Journal can only be fulfilled if authors continue to take the trouble to write primarily for us, as they have done in this last year.