



Valediction

Peter G Robinson

This issue marks another series of big changes for *Community Dental Health*. Whilst the cliché tells us that there is nothing permanent except change, Darwin realised that it's "not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change". We're heeding Darwin's words, even though his star never rose as high as publishing in this journal.

The world of academic journals is especially susceptible to such shifts. Open Access (OA) publishing makes research findings freely available, with researchers paying to publish their work, rather than expecting readers to cough up for the privilege. Many research funders require data to be openly accessible in this way. Of course, this is a new funding model, but for the last ten years we have allowed authors to choose OA publication.

There are also more academics submitting more papers, with a particular rise in manuscripts from outside of Europe. This growth is accompanied by an increase in the number of journals. Unfortunately, predatory journals have emerged that do not adhere to standards of ethics or peer review and there are now parallel concerns about the integrity of some researchers; and that's before we think about Artificial Intelligence. In this context, the need for *CDH* to maintain its standing as a high-quality journal demands more work and a better prepared Editorial Board and referees.

In addition, driven by a centralisation of publishing and their need to minimise costs, libraries now subscribe to packages of journals from academic publishers rather than to individual titles. A small journal from a non-academic publisher is an easy target in libraries' spending reviews, and we have seen our revenue from institutional subscribers fall by 30% in the last ten years. Naturally, printing and postage costs have continued to increase, and we have been mindful of our energy and paper use. Putting the journal in fewer libraries means that fewer academics can read it and then think of submitting their work to us. Reassuringly, *CDH* has thrived despite all these challenges; the journal's ranking for the number of times we are cited has risen to its highest level ever.

Over the last eight years *CDH* has responded radically to this mutable environment by:

- Using the growing number of submissions to drive quality, by only publishing the very best papers.
- Publishing the journal online only
- Strengthening our links with the European Association for Dental Public Health and El Sociedad Española de Epidemiología y Salud Pública Oral (SESPO, The Spanish Association of Dental Epidemiology and Oral Public Health).

- Prioritising systematic and critical reviews to maintain the quality and relevance of our content
- Raising our visibility on social media and using editorials as provocative reviews
- Reducing manuscript turnaround times so that mean time from submission to publication has fallen from 21 months in 2012 to only 8.5 months (papers go online 3 months ahead of publication).
- Making our content more accessible to members and opening our archive so that anyone can access all papers more than 3 years old

As already noted, *CDH* can only enhance its standing by being able to anticipate and shift in such a volatile world. One way to do that is to engage with a dedicated academic publisher. Our current publishers (*This is DB*) are a marketing agency working on project management, printing, design, IT, marketing and logistics, as well as academic publishing. This broad range of activities brings many skills relevant to *CDH*, but it is now time for us to move to a specialist publisher. From the next issue onwards, *CDH* will be published by Sage, who will help us be proactive and will market the journal to libraries as part of a suite.

The final change is to welcome a new Editor from 2025. *CDH* has been very lucky to recruit Dr Wael Sabbah, of King's College, London. Wael has been a long-standing and energetic member of our Editorial Board and is a vastly experienced researcher. *CDH* will be in excellent hands.

This then, will be my last issue as Editor. It has been an enormous privilege to act in this capacity for the last eight years. As a junior academic I remember being in awe of my predecessors, so this has been one of the proudest parts of my career. It's also been fulfilling to support less experienced colleagues with their work and to see the journal develop amidst everything else that's been going on.

Such a busy tenure would not have been possible without fantastic support. In one guise or another, *This is DB* has published *CDH* since its foundation, 40 years ago. Throughout my time, Dennis and Jo, our friends there, have been unfailingly positive, responsive and kind. I wish them all good fortune for the future. Although practically unseen to most people, Jan Vicary has been a force of nature as our Editorial Assistant. She has kept the journal (and me!) on track with her proactive, alert and smart work and I am immensely grateful for all that she has done. Lastly, our Editorial Board have been a great sounding board and a source of wise advice. Some of them are standing down at the same time as me. Here's to plenty of cycling and fishing.