LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Faced with an increasing amount of medical information, peer-reviewed journals have the increasing responsibility of providing unbiased, balanced and trustworthy information to health care professionals, stakeholders, governing bodies and the general public. The peer-review process is a critical element in the development and management of our health care system and the improvement of health outcomes.

The topic of editorial independence has been discussed many times both in the lay press and various scientific publications. However, the high level of interest from Canadian physicians, the media and the general public regarding the personnel changes at the Canadian Medical Association Journal (CMAJ) compels me, as a Publisher of peer-review journals, to address the issue again. It also offers me the opportunity to reinforce the importance of clearly separating the roles of the content decision-maker (Editor-in-Chief) and the producer (Publisher).

Although they are both peer-reviewed journals, Pain Research & Management (the Journal) differs from the CMAJ in that the Journal does not contain articles written in-house that could be considered investigative reporting. That being said, the fundamental principles of peer review publishing must still be applied – the content is determined by the Editor-in-Chief and the Editorial Board, who have full editorial autonomy and are completely independent of the business aspects of publishing.

In a survey of the editors of 33 medical journals owned by associations in the United States, 30% reported not having complete editorial freedom. Indeed, a substantial minority reported having received some pressure over editorial content from their ownership (1).

This is certainly not the case with the journals owned and published by Pulsus Group and endorsed by their relevant Canadian medical societies. While Pulsus Group is responsible for producing the Journal in a commercially viable manner, it has no control over the Editor-in-Chief or the content. The financial risk lies solely with Pulsus Group, and the responsibility for content lies solely with the Editor-in-Chief and the Editorial Board. In this way, the financial interests of the Journal cannot in any way influence the editorial content, and the integrity of the peer-review process is maintained.

The process that we began 22 years ago has withstood the test of time. The collaborative efforts of four groups – the Editors, Association, Publisher and Advertisers – each with separate and distinct objectives and responsibilities, work together to create a journal that none of us could create on our own. It is not always an easy task, but the outcome is certainly worth the effort.

Robert B Kalina
Publisher, Pulsus Group Inc

REFERENCE

The views expressed in this letter are solely those of the Publisher on behalf of Pulsus Group Inc.