

Submitting articles to the *BMJ* via the web

Should improve the process for authors, reviewers, and editors

From this week we are inviting all authors who want to submit a paper to the *BMJ* to do so via the web (<http://submit.bmj.com>).

We have introduced Benchpress, our new web based manuscript tracking system, with the aim of streamlining our processes and providing better, quicker information for authors, reviewers, and editors. Although using Benchpress demands new ways of working from all these groups, our experience in piloting the system suggests it will succeed in these aims.

Benchpress is a website where authors deposit their manuscripts and editors go to read them and record their decisions. When editors decide to send a paper for peer review they use the system to select a reviewer; an email then goes to the reviewer inviting him or her to access the site to see the relevant paper. Reviewers too go to the site to upload their reviews, which are immediately available to editors and also, once a decision has been made, to the authors. The system is secure, protected by passwords, so that authors see only their own papers and reviewers see only those they are meant to.

For authors in particular the system offers several benefits. The system provides all our guidance and forms and allows authors to suggest reviewers for their paper—something we'd like to encourage. Authors can watch the progress of their manuscript; and the record of their submission, including editors' and reviewers' reports, remains on the system for future reference. Submitting a manuscript may seem cumbersome the first time round, particularly because authors have to sign on to the system, but thereafter the system remembers the author's contact details, so subsequent submissions are easier.

Distance is no longer a barrier to access or a cause of delay—as it has been with paper manuscripts. Manuscripts don't get lost in the post or delayed. Authors get an instant acknowledgment that their submission has been received. Editors can more confidently use reviewers overseas because they don't have to rely on uncertain postal services to get manuscripts to them. Editors can make decisions and take action whether they are in the office or outside it. We can be sure that papers reach reviewers, and they can follow the progress of manuscripts they have advised on. A bonus for editors and reviewers is that the system adds Medline links to all references in a paper (assuming authors have formatted them correctly). That allows them to click from a reference through to the abstract, and in many cases the full text, of a cited paper while they are reading the manuscript.

Anyone with an internet connection and a web browser can use the system, but using it effectively does challenge old habits of reading and writing. Working out how to access the components of a paper and its

record efficiently and reading it on screen or downloading it take some getting used to—but this problem is greater for editors than for individual reviewers and authors looking at single papers. One of the *BMJ*'s sister journals, *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, has been using Benchpress for almost a year and 90% of its manuscripts are now submitted using it.

The system is run by Highwire Press, who host bmj.com, and is already being used by 30 journals, including most of the BMJ Publishing Group's specialist journals. There will be teething problems, but the system itself offers extensive help, and the *BMJ*'s editorial office is geared up to help authors and reviewers if they get stuck. We see Benchpress as part of our endeavour to improve our service to authors and reviewers and, as always, we'd welcome feedback.

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Benchpress is accessed via <http://submit.bmj.com> or via a link from bmj.com

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Correction

The world's most neglected diseases

An inadvertent lapse in our editorial process meant that an author's name was missing from this editorial (27 July, pp 176-7). Gavin Yamey's coauthor was Els Torreele, co-chair of the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Working Group at Médecins Sans Frontières, Geneva, Switzerland. We apologise for this omission.

We ask all editorial writers to sign a declaration of competing interests (bmj.com/guides/confli.shtml#aut). We print the interests only when there are some. When none are shown, the authors have ticked the "None declared" box.