



## Editor's Notes

### *Reflections on 3 Years as Editor of Education for Health*

In my Notes in the prior issue of *Education for Health* I indicated this will be my last issue as Editor. As I also indicated, I have an eye problem that made inevitable my decision to not renew for another 3-year term. So, I'm writing this last set of Notes with both sadness and a sense of relief.

While preparing to withdraw from this assignment I've been reflecting a good deal on my experiences with the journal during this past 3 years. Out of many observations, I've arrived at a few conclusions that I want to share with you now. First I will explain three of the main reasons why I've concluded that EfH is unique among health professions education (HPE) journals. Then I'll summarize two strategies that would strengthen and improve many of the papers we receive.

### *EfH Is Unique*

*Inspiring People and Projects.* The authors, reviewers and Editorial Board members associated with EfH are genuinely exceptional people. They share a vision and a commitment that is inspiring. In large part these are people who are working diligently to make life better for students, patients and the communities where they are located. Many of our authors work and live under trying conditions and their available resources are highly limited. Yet, with persistence and imagination many have helped devise HPE institutions that are among the most enlightened in the world. It is a privilege to be helping them publish reports of their work.

*Origins of our Papers.* I have no way to confirm this, but I'm quite confident that we receive submissions from far more countries than does any other journal in our field. Just like The Network that sponsors this journal, we enjoy a uniquely rich representation of countries and cultures. A key factor in what makes EfH special is the wide range and diversity of the programs and settings presented by our authors.

*Support of Authors.* Like other international journals, our language of publication is English. Many of our authors, therefore, are forced to write in a language that is not their own. Not surprisingly, a fair proportion of our papers arrive in less than optimal shape. Most journals in our field tend to make fairly hasty accept/reject decisions on the submissions they receive. They have relatively little inclination to work with their authors in bringing their

submissions up to an acceptable level. At EfH, if we sense that there is potential value embedded in the initial manuscript we receive, we are prepared to go to considerable lengths to help our authors achieve their paper's potential. We work with the authors, providing guidance to the extent that we can. We are willing to go back and forth multiple times, as long as authors demonstrate a productive effort to enhance their reports. We have even solicited a group of experienced academic writers who have volunteered to serve as mentors to selected authors. So another factor that makes EfH special is our treatment of authors.

### *What Many Submissions Need*

Every submission, of course, is unique. Yet, after 3 years I can generalize that there are two difficulties that are dominant among the reasons why papers are rejected or need to undergo substantial revision before they can be considered for publication.

*Identify and Report your Lessons Learned.* Not enough authors seem to recognize that projects, findings, or ideas are only worth being published if *others can benefit from reading what is presented*. If you have been, or are considering being, an EfH author, I encourage you to think of the following questions before writing it up for submission. What lessons have you learned that can be put to use by others? Have you thought about the various circumstances under which your readers might be working? Have you considered the possible ways in which what you want to say can be of most interest, use, and value to others, in settings that are different from yours?

*Minimize Ambiguity.* Although vocabulary, grammar and sentence construction are all important to helping ensure that others understand your information and ideas, the most common cause of papers being confusing, unclear, or unacceptable is ambiguity. Too many writers aren't sufficiently careful to review and edit what they have written. For almost all of us there is a considerable risk that the first draft of any writing we do includes assumptions we've made based on the thoughts that happened to be on our minds at the time. Writing that is perfectly clear to us at the time we compose it may be far less clear to others. You might find that your writing can be significantly improved by taking two steps that many of us always take. First: set your writing aside for at least a day, and preferably several days, and then review it, trying to imagine that you are a stranger to the material, checking every sentence and paragraph for clarity of intention and meaning. Second: invite one or more trusted colleagues to review your writing with the intent of being honestly critical of any sign of ambiguity or other obstacle to maximum clarity.

### *Welcome*

As I indicated in our previous issue, my departure is made possible by the appointment of Ronald Richards, PhD as my successor as Editor of EfH. Ron

is featured in this issue's edition of our series, *Making a Difference*. There, you will learn about his deep and long-sustained commitment to the values that have been central to The Network's existence and to the character of this journal. With delight I extend to Ron a warm welcome and a wish for a long and joyous tenure as Editor of *Education for Health: Change in Learning and Practice*. I can add that his work as Editor will be made both easy and pleasant because all of our existing staff will continue to support his efforts.

*Thanks*

With deep gratitude and admiration I pass on to our new Editor our insightful Associate Editors, Gerard Majoor, Jan van Dalen, and Jane Westberg, and our diligent Book Review Editor, Christine Taylor. And I know that Ron will appreciate, as I have, the skilled help of the conscientious journal staff at The Network office: our Managing Editor, Marie-Louise Panis, our secretary, Maud Senden, and the ever-present guidance of Pauline Vluggen.

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