

publication in any of the reputable scientific journals. After initial triage, the paper is routed to appropriate specialists on the editorial board for minute, line-by-line scrutiny and detailed critical analysis. In these days of super-specialization, editors frequently enlist the services of outside consultants. Each referee sends his exhaustive critique to the editor-in-chief or the field editor, whichever is appropriate for the particular journal. On the basis of these evaluations and his own judgment, the editor may accept the paper with but minor changes if any, accept it with revisions, or reject it. Unsigned copies of the criticisms of each referee usually are sent to the authors, who then have the options of withdrawing their manuscript, revising it as suggested or, alternatively, rebutting the objections in correspondence with the editor. When all criticisms have been met, the amended manuscript is accepted for publication. The fact of publication itself signifies that the article has been examined in great detail by members and consultants of the editorial board and found worthy of presentation to the readers.

Against this background of understanding, it seems apparent that the instances of negative commentary listed above were all tantamount to referees' criticisms, somewhat elaborated. As such they should properly have been forwarded under editorial anonymity to the authors, who would then have been free to exercise the options enumerated. One of two things would have become obvious immediately. If the objections raised in an invited commentary were valid, the offending paper should have been withdrawn, rendering the commentary superfluous; if the authors were able successfully to repudiate the criticisms, then the commentary, now vitiated, should have been withdrawn. In neither circumstance is there any justification for publication of the commentary itself as such. (There could be no objection, however, to its appearance in the journal at a later date in the "Letters to the Editor" column, with opportunity, of course, for the authors to reply by letter either in the same column or subsequently.) Indeed, it seems highly improper for the guest commentator to speak *in loco editoris*, himself immune from the normal proc-

esses of editorial review. Such occurrences should in future be scrupulously avoided.

What then constitutes valid scientific functions of editorial commentary? The code seems simple: (1) negative remarks are superfluous; (2) laudatory comments are redundant unless the report is an unusually outstanding contribution; and (3) publication of truly controversial articles may be defended.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S NOTE

I thought it would be of interest to both Dr. Mark and our readers to learn the opinions of the Editorial Board on the questions raised in this letter. So here they are, and they represent an interesting diversity of opinion on both Dr. Mark's remarks and on editorial policy in general.

Material, critical or otherwise, submitted by Dr. Mark, has been, in my experience, well written, usually witty, and always showing evidence of considerable thought. Therefore, I enjoy his efforts. Nevertheless, he is no more infallible than the average man or, for that matter, the average editor. For the most part I look on this most recent commentary of Dr. Mark's as merely his opinion of what editorial policy should be, not what the universal laws state it should be. Were he to become editor, it is quite apparent that the number of editorials in this Journal would be curtailed sharply through applying the criteria listed in the last paragraph.

I think he was a little bit hard on the editorials by Eger and Larson, both of which, I felt, did a good job of presenting useful background material relating to difficult subjects, thus giving a better perspective from which to view the original articles. I believe neither of these essays was in the least offensive. I think the same comment could be made about Price's comments in the January-February 1968 commentary, although there may be more justification for the complaint that this is at once a critical and a "criticizing" essay.

Finally, in the author's own words, "Here is a curious state of affairs." I refer to Dr. Mark's own editorial effort in the March-April 1966 issue, which is about as "criticizing" in tone as

he feels the others were. I give him credit for including his own editorial, but am at loss as to why he submitted it in the first place if he were so opposed to this approach.

In spite of this, there is a certain amount of logic in parts of his critique of the method presently utilized, and perhaps his suggestion that the authors should have a chance to read and rebut these editorials should be given serious consideration. However, the added time and effort for the editor to implement this circuitous method would have to be taken into account. We have, of course, considered the alternative of an active "Letters to the Editor" section which would be useful in meeting this problem. We decided that, because of the bi-monthly publication, interchange would tend to be outdated a good part of the time, thus losing part of its impact. However, perhaps it should be reconsidered.

Without debating the point of whether Dr. Price's piece was invited *editorial* commentary, Dr. Mark seems to have one valid point. Cristoforo and Brody apparently did not have opportunity for simultaneous commentary. Opportunity for later reply obviously exists and should be respected if submitted.

But the major issue of Dr. Mark's editorial is quite something else. Exclusive of his discussion of the editorial process, his rather arbitrary definition of the type of scientific material which should or should not be the subject of editorial comment overlooks a fact of editorial life. Stripped of semantics, editors contend with a large area between "negative remarks" and "truly controversial" subjects. This area may embrace a wide spectrum of matters—pure opinion, ethical considerations, evaluation requiring additional knowledge not yet available, etc. Each may have implications an editor should, and in fact, is obligated to, convey to readers. The reader, so informed, is on notice to exercise his own judgment (always his right and responsibility) with particular care. There are limits to what the Editorial Board realistically can achieve in serving as the guarantor of what it considers "worthy of presentation to readers." *Caveat emptor* is always implicit in any expression (editor's) implying a value judgment.

Last, but not least, are the limitations Dr. Mark's definition of appropriate conditions for editorial comment would impose on editorial freedom within the usual canons of honesty, integrity, etc. It is Dr. Mark's privilege to disagree with how an editor exercises his responsibilities, but it is an editor's privilege to continue to do this according to his own best judgment. Here, too, the ultimate decision rests with the value judgments of others.

I believe Dr. Mark has misinterpreted the purposes of our editorial commentaries. If he has misinterpreted them, others probably have, too. The purposes of these editorial commentaries do at times fall short of the mark. But they do not have an "aura of authority," they are not always related to the importance of the article, and they provide no added prestige value for the article.

Dr. Mark raises significant questions about the scientific functions of editorial commentary. He advocates restriction of editorial expression to two types: an occasional editorial emphasizing the significance of an outstanding contribution; and editorials defending or justifying publication of "truly controversial articles," so designated because important conclusions are inconclusively proven. All other editorial contents are "superfluous or redundant."

I fault Dr. Mark's logic and hence his conclusions on three counts.

First, editorials are *not* immune from review. Editorials, like original articles, undergo careful scrutiny by the Editorial Board and, when necessary, opinions of outside consultants are sought. Editorials, like original articles, are also subject to criticism by the scientific community at large, in the form of dissenting "Letters to the Editor."

Second, all articles presenting original and significant observations contain controversial points of view that are unresolvable because of lack of appropriate data. The author of such an article should not be forced to embrace or stoutly defend plausible conclusions alternative to his own, in which he does not believe, to have his article published. This de-

fense is better presented by the proponent of the opposite viewpoint. Excellent illustrations of this would be the May-June 1965 editorial on ethylene uptake and the January-February 1968 commentary.

Third, the single, most important purpose of an editorial is one which Dr. Mark did not even mention; that is, to give the reader the background information requisite for understanding the specific article. This may take the form of definitions or descriptions of pertinent terminology. An excellent example of such an editorial can be found in the Novem-

ber-December 1965 issue of ANESTHESIOLOGY. The bulk of this article concerns itself with respiratory terminology, and contains only two brief and rather minor criticisms of the original article to which the editorial relates. Furthermore, most original research papers consider only a limited aspect of a broad research area. It is extremely helpful to the reader not actively working in a specific area to have a recognized expert relate the results of that research to the total field. Accepting Dr. Mark's proposal would deny our readers this invaluable educational experience.

Abstract—Continued from p. 850

two patients, a dose of 1 mg. prostigmine, given after GDA had produced a marked effect, did not further increase tension or improve respiration. No serious side effects were observed. No cardiac arrhythmias or bradycardia was seen. Blood pressure usually increased by 10 to 25 mm. Hg. An increase in salivation frequently was observed. In several patients, a contraction of abdominal muscles or hiccough occurred during rapid injection of the alkaloid when anesthesia was light. Postoperative courses were uneventful, and no adverse effects which could have been attributed to the drug were noted.

Germine diacetate, given when skeletal muscle power was depressed as result of administration of neuromuscular blocking agents, invariably improved tension development in a peripheral muscle during stimulation of the motor nerve. The magnitude of the increase depended upon the degree of block existing

before administration of the alkaloid. When block was not greater than 80 per cent, twitch tension increased to values considerably above normal. When block was nearly complete, administration of GDA increased the response to a subsequent dose of prostigmine. GDA did not cause general cholinomimetic side effects commonly seen with anticholinesterase agents. The side effects encountered can be explained on the basis of afferent sensory stimulation which the alkaloid is known to cause. GDA did not cause worsening of neuromuscular block, as it does not produce neuromuscular block in animals even in high doses. Clinical improvement of muscle function, especially of respiratory muscles, was reasonably parallel to the function of the adductor pollicis. These observations warrant further studies of the classical usefulness of GDA for reversal of neuromuscular block. (Supported by USEHS grants NB 07112, GM-09069, and GM 00165.)