Capturing the essence of original articles in “sHoRt”: an innovation in publishing in Human Reproduction

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The Editorial Team of Human Reproduction (Deputy Editors, Managing Editor and Editor-in-Chief) has for some time been considering the validity and feasibility of launching a new print format for original articles, which would enable readers to gain the salient points of an article prior to deciding whether or not to read the article in full – a little like the BMJ’s “pico” research articles. The aim of the “sHoRt” is to capture the essence, novelty and importance of original articles making the information more instantly available for readers. sHoRt articles will summarise the research question, study design and funding, set out what is already known in the literature and what the paper adds, and include details of funding and competing interests. We believe that in this time-strapped era many clinicians and scientists will value the opportunity to read a shortened version that succinctly presents the key findings of original articles in a single page with a simple table or figure. The first example sHoRt is in this first issue of 2011 of Human Reproduction (doi:10.1093/humrep/deq306), and we aim to increase the number of sHoRt articles over time. Initially they will be prepared by the Editorial Team and their contents will be approved by the authors. Over time we will ask the authors of accepted manuscripts to produce the short version of the article. Templates for writing sHoRt articles will be provided and after typesetting and formatting it will fit onto a single printed page. Just as abstracts in Human Reproduction are, sHoRt articles will be “free access”.

Like many other Editors, we believe that over time original articles will be online only with one advantage being that there will be no word limit and that supplementary material of articles will be fully incorporated in the online article. In Human Reproduction we plan a gradual transition and this is the first step in these innovative changes. Of course we will be listening to your reactions, and we will be asking our authors and readers for their opinion on these changes.