

Evolution and change

On 14 April 1859, Charles Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species*, in which he put forward his theory of evolution of life on planet Earth, was published. Based on observations on the voyage of the *HMS Beagle*, his theory has been hotly debated ever since, with those who find his arguments compelling staunchly defending this thesis. There are those who reject Darwin's conclusions as vehemently as those who accept them. No matter where an individual falls in the spectrum of the debate, the important issue is how Darwin's thoughts were made public: by publishing them. In our current world of medical and scientific learning, the most up-to-date theories and knowledge is found in journals.

Update in Anaesthesia, an official journal of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA), is about to undergo an evolution itself. Bruce McCormick, a Consultant Anaesthetist at the Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust, in the UK, has been the editor-in-chief of this periodical since he took over from its founder, Iain Wilson, in 2006. He has laboured long and hard to produce this outstanding world-wide vehicle for anaesthesia-related education. This edition is his fourteenth: an amazing record of publication given that through most, if not all, of his tenure as editor-in-chief he has worked virtually alone. Bruce has devised editorial content, found authors willing to write, helped edit papers from those who spontaneously contributed, and seen the articles through the typesetting and printing stages. Quite honestly, *Update in Anaesthesia* would not currently exist were it not for Bruce's dedication and hard work.

Over the past year, Bruce has made the very difficult decision to step down as editor-in-chief, and this is in fact his last edition of the journal in that role. Thus, the WFSA Publications Committee has been charged with the very difficult task of defining what the journal has the potential to become, what the organisation believes it should be, and finding the proper leadership to fulfil this vision. Since the World Congress last September, the Committee has been working hard at these tasks.

The Committee's vision is that over the next decade *Update in Anaesthesia* will become a formally peer-reviewed journal. This means that each article will be reviewed and commented upon by individuals who are experts in the area the manuscript addresses. This process is important for several reasons. First,

it helps validate the conclusions expressed in the article. Second, it serves as a mechanism to prevent plagiarism. Third, it allows scrutiny of data to assess their validity and possible falsification. While no peer review process is completely accurate, it is the standard for journals across the world. We will continue to produce themed editions of the journal that help disseminate the latest knowledge on various practice areas in anaesthesia, with particular emphasis on the challenges of providing anaesthesia in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Once our vision for *Update in Anaesthesia* was agreed, the Publications Committee, with the outstanding support of the WFSA Secretariat, put out a call for those interested in the job of editor-in-chief. A number of highly qualified individuals submitted their curriculum vitae with a covering letter outlining their expertise and suitability for the position. Three candidates were short-listed and interviewed by internet video link. The WFSA Secretariat was invaluable in overcoming the complex issues of linking candidates and interviewers who were spread across the world in six different time zones – amazingly no one was on line at 2 o'clock in the morning!

After considerable deliberation, Alan Jay Schwartz was chosen as the editor-in-chief. Dr Schwartz is a paediatric anaesthetist at the Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the United States. Alan has been in practice for the better part of four decades and has extensive editorial experience at both *Anesthesiology* and *Anesthesia and Analgesia*. He has deep passion for education and great enthusiasm for, and understanding of, the needs, goals and aspirations of the WFSA. His belief in our shared vision for *Update in Anaesthesia* will allow the publication to continue to serve its target readership in LMICs, whilst achieving our long-held goal of becoming indexed in the National Library of Medicine's PubMed Index. This will make the journal far more accessible to its readers in all parts of the world.

This recruitment process also identified two other outstanding editorial candidates, and Dr Schwartz reached out to them to join the editorial board as Associate Editors. Victoria Howell, a Consultant Anaesthetist with an interest in paediatrics, works at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn, in the UK and brings a wealth of experience in anaesthesia in LMICs. She has served as the Head of the Anaesthesia

Department in the CCBRT (Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania) Disability Hospital, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The other appointed Associate Editor is Professor Aina Christina Lungren, who currently serves as the Chief Specialist and Head of the Anaesthesia Department at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto. She is also Academic Head of Anaesthesia at the University of the Witwatersrand. Christina edited the *South African Journal of Anaesthesia* for over 13 years and this editorial experience is essential to moving *Update* forward.

Dr Schwartz and his team are currently investigating software to facilitate electronic submission of manuscripts to the journal. This program will also track where the article is in the publication process – Is it under peer review and with whom? Has it been returned to the author for revision? Has it been accepted? and in which edition of the journal will it be published? The next set of challenges for Alan and his team is to recruit an editorial board and to begin to

develop a publication schedule with the goal to produce two editions each year. There is much work to be done, but there are also many individuals willing to help.

While Charles Darwin's work was controversial when published and remains so, the work of Bruce McCormick stands as a testament to one man's belief and hard work. He is handing over *Update in Anaesthesia* as a strong publication. Alan Jay Schwartz has made remarkable progress in a short period of time, largely because he is inheriting a well-developed platform from Bruce. The WFSA and world community of anaesthesia owes Bruce a debt of gratitude we cannot repay. From the Publications Committee, thank you for a job well done.

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