Good People With Whom To Work

Recently, I have been asked by several members of the American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP) why I have not written anything about the termination of two prominent medical editors. Obviously, I have not been reticent to express my opinions about other matters, and it seemed strange that I would avoid this issue.

I thought about writing earlier, but Dr. Kassirer and others said it all in their farewell editorials in the New England Journal of Medicine. In addition, the members of the World Association of Medical Editors inundated the Internet with e-mails of howling disapproval. A similar spate of e-mails occurred at the termination of Dr. George Lundberg, editor-in-chief of the Journal of the American Medical Association. Enough had been written and said about the matter, and nothing had changed the decisions that were made.

I am writing now more to thank those who have made my job so pleasant rather than to criticize those who made the jobs of others unpleasant. While I am the editor-in-chief of CHEST, the owner of the journal is the ACCP, and the publisher is listed as the chief executive officer of the ACCP, Mr. Alvin Lever. In the past 6.5 years, not once has there been interference with the editorial process or policies of the journal. What intervention has occurred has always been to help the process and to preserve the editorial independence of the editorial board. Never have political, pharmaceutical, or financial interests interfered with my decisions about the content of CHEST. I therefore can take full responsibility for what is published in these pages. This is as it should be.

Another person whose monumental contributions to the journal have not been highly publicized is Mr. Steve Welch, the executive editor of CHEST. I have been given credit for many things that Steve has actually done, including the full-text on-line version of CHEST, the accuracy of the material published in the journal, the speed of publication, and the innovation and cheerfulness of the whole operation. This editorial will serve to publicly thank Steve for all his help in the past 5 years.

No, I don’t approve of the abrupt termination of good editors by prestigious journals. If the owner or publisher of the journal does not like the decisions made by the editor-in-chief, another editor can be hired at the end of the current contract. To fire any editor for his decisions about publication should require some greater justification than “we want to do it differently.” Thank goodness that CHEST has none of these problems.

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REFERENCES

Reality-Based Medicine

In 1994, the results of the first Lung Health Study were published. The study was noteworthy for several of its findings. Most important, the study showed that the regular administration of inhaled bronchodilator neither accelerated nor slowed the rate of lung function decline seen in susceptible smokers. As had been suggested before, the only effective way to slow the rate of lung function decline in smokers is to convince them to become nonsmokers. But the Lung Health Study was also the first large study of respiratory care to demonstrate what appears to be a widespread phenomenon among our patients: “dose dumping.” A subset of