

Editorial

In search of total quality

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One of the characteristics of the modern world is ever-increasing competitiveness, in all areas. This obliges institutions, companies and individuals to strive constantly for excellence in providing products and services. At the entrepreneurial level, the term quality can be defined as the sum of the characteristics of an entity that confers upon it the capacity to satisfy the explicit and implicit needs of its clients. Following this line of thinking, total quality denotes an optimum state of efficiency and efficacy in the activities of all the elements that constitute the existence of the company. From this viewpoint, the Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology can be considered a product and all of the people involved in its production, a company. In this enterprise, the readers are the clients, as are the authors who submit their manuscripts for publication.

In the corporate milieu, one way of assuring the quality of a product or process is to obtain an ISO 9000 certificate from the International Organization for Standardization. Scientific journals are awarded such 'quality seals' when they are included in reputable and renowned international indexing systems. In recent years, the Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology has made great strides in terms of quality. The proof of this is that, in addition to being accessible via various databases, including the *Literatura Latino-Americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde* (LILACS, Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature), the Sistema Regional de Información en Línea para Revistas Científicas de América Latina, el Caribe, España y Portugal (Latindex, Information System for the Scholarly Journals of Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal) and the Brazilian version of the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), the Journal has recently been indexed for Medline. However, this last achievement, rather than being the end of the road, leads us to another road filled with great challenges. An appropriate name for the new set of goals to be achieved by the Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology is 'the pursuit of total quality', which can be defined as follows:

Maintaining the independence of the editorial board:

Over the years, the board of directors of the Brazilian Thoracic Society (BTS) has always guaranteed an environment in which the Editor-in-Chief and his staff can work free of constraints. Editorial decisions are made with scientific

honesty, aiming solely at improving the Journal, without the influence of outside interests. Nevertheless, when making decisions, those in charge of the Journal have always taken into consideration the general principles that guide the BTS and have attempted to maintain the economic balance of the publication. This model of harmonious co-existence has proven crucial to the success of the Journal and will certainly be maintained in the decades to come.

Improvement and expedition of the dynamics and internal processes:

There are certain aspects that, although typically invisible to those not directly involved with the production of the Journal, are fundamental to ensuring that the Journal is delivered to the readers on time and without errors. The process begins when an article under consideration for publication is submitted to peer review, in which it is evaluated by the reviewers and returned to the authors for correction, if necessary. The introduction of the online system of article submission and management has greatly facilitated and expedited this process. Although the time it takes the peer reviewers to complete their work has always been the principal factor limiting the speed of the evaluation process, authors occasionally also find it difficult to meet deadlines. Once accepted, an article must be submitted to a review of the text in Portuguese, soon after which a separate version in English is created. The preparation of a text for publication also involves configuring the layout and formatting the illustrations (tables, charts and figures). At this point, different members of the team participate in reviewing the preliminary version of the manuscript, each team member focusing on a different aspect and correcting any errors found. The file is then sent, together with the other files for that issue, to the print shop, and the Journal is printed. The individual copies then need to be distributed by mail in a timely fashion. In parallel with all of that, the homepage of the Journal is periodically updated, and bibliographical data are sent to indexing services, such as SciELO Brazil. The planned strategy for optimizing the performance of the internal processes of the Journal involves reducing the number of steps as well as the number of parties involved in its production. This is being achieved by transferring responsibilities to a minimal number of specialized compa-

nies that will take the Journal through specific steps of the process in a more efficacious and professional manner. The use of electronic communication resources is of great importance in this context.

Maintenance and improvement of the formal aspects: Constant attention is required in order to maintain linguistic precision and correct grammar usage, as well as to avoid typographical errors. In addition, the layout must be configured with great care, the formatting must be consistent, and the printing must be of the highest quality. An apparently minor detail, such as slight variations between copies in terms of the color on the covers, cannot be overlooked. Similarly, keyword and reference lists must be prepared in accordance with the Journal recommendations. The cornerstone of the process is consistency (standardization), which must be striven for by the authors and other professionals involved in the production of the Journal. The basic guidelines for this standardization are the instructions to authors, which are available online, as well as at the end of each issue. Standardized norms must also be adhered to in the preparation of the Special Supplements and the BTS Guidelines, both of which are important for keeping our readers up to date. These norms were approved by the BTS Board of Directors and can be obtained from the Secretary of the Journal.

Enriching the content: Although this is one of the most important objectives to be achieved, it is an aspect over which the editorial board of the Journal has little influence. The final decision as to what is published in the Journal is made by the Editor-in-Chief, based on the critiques given by the reviewers and, with increasing frequency, on the opinion of the Associate Editors. However, such decisions are made based on the articles submitted. Therefore, the task of improving the quality of the scientific content of the Journal is largely in the hands of the authors and researchers working in Brazil. The Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology encourages the submission of manuscripts describing studies that involve significant sample sizes, rigorous study design/methodology and novel results. Although review articles are, as a rule, by invitation only, the Editor-in-Chief welcomes inquiries regarding proposed subjects. In fact, internationally renowned authors have made significant contributions to the Journal through the submission of review articles. Well-documented and well-illustrated case reports,

which highlight peculiar or important aspects of clinical practice, are equally welcome. Dear author: before sending your study to a journal abroad, consider submitting it to the Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology!

Internationalization of the Journal: The process of internationalization consists of two intimately related facets. One facet is the dissemination of the Journal content abroad. The distribution of copies at the BTS stands during international congresses has long contributed to this process. However, making the full content of the manuscripts more widely available, in Portuguese and English, on the Internet, is crucial to the success of this enterprise. We believe that we will soon be able to send e-mail announcements of the publication of issues of the Journal to members of international pulmonology societies, concomitant to the distribution of copies to the members of the BTS. Naturally, direct access to published articles on the PubMed site will be fundamental to the dissemination of our Journal. The second facet is the publication of articles submitted from abroad. The Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology has an enormous potential to receive articles coming from Portuguese-speaking countries, as well as from all of Latin America. We also aspire to eliciting contributions from other continents and from countries in which the official language is not a Latin-based language. There is a consensus that the accurate translation of the Journal contents into English is fundamental to the process as a whole. At the moment, the internationalization of the Journal requires that the Journal homepage, as well as the electronic systems that allow access to it through international indexing systems and search engines, be maintained in perfect working order and constantly updated. In the intermediate-term, we will probably need to revisit the idea of publishing a version of the Journal entirely in English.

Obtaining an impact factor: There is considerable controversy surrounding the issue of how best to evaluate the value of scientific production. One index that is widely used for this purpose is the impact factor of a publication. This index can be considered a measurement of the importance of a scientific journal. It is calculated and disseminated by a private American institution, the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), currently managed by Thomson Scientific, previously known as Thomson ISI. The impact factor is published annually in the

Journal Citation Reports for a limited number of scientific journals (those indexed for this system). The impact factor is calculated for a three-year observation period, using the following formula: (number of times that the articles published during the initial two years are cited in the third year) ÷ (total number of articles published by the journal in the preceding two years). It should be noted that the most important element of this equation is the number of times the articles are cited. The publication of a large number of studies per year has little scientific value; in addition, without the possibility of citations, it is ultimately detrimental to the impact factor. According to the criteria employed by the Brazilian agency known as the Coordination of the Advancement of Higher Education to evaluate postgraduate programs, Brazilian journals with ISI/Thomson Scientific impact factors are classified as international level A or B, whereas those not indexed for the ISI are classified as international level C. Therefore, the Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology is presently considered international level C. The indexing of our Journal for the ISI/Thomson Scientific system will be a natural consequence of achieving and maintaining the goals and standards previously mentioned in this text. In addition, the key to obtaining an impact factor is, once again, in the hands of our readers and authors. It is crucial that articles published in the Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology be cited frequently by

the authors of manuscripts published in international journals already indexed for the ISI/Thomson Scientific system. Given the significant number of articles written by Brazilian authors and annually published in journals abroad, this is certainly feasible. Similarly, the growing number of original and review articles of unprecedented quality and scientific value published in our Journal will ease this task, promoting the citation of our manuscripts by other authors.

As of the present issue, we will be introducing slight modifications in the format and greater changes in the internal procedures of the Journal, as part of 'the pursuit of total quality'. The creation of the position of Executive Editor is part of this new dynamic and is aimed at the sharing of tasks, as well as at directly involving more people in the production of the Journal. As a result, we hope to further promote the growth and professionalism of our publication. As we can see in this text, there are many opportunities, even for individuals not directly involved in the production of the Journal (editorial board members, reviewers, authors and readers), to contribute to its advancement. Here is an invitation: "In 2007, come join us at the Brazilian Journal of Pulmonology!"

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Pulmonology