Greetings! In this email I aim to tell you about the recent meeting of the International Epidemiological Association Council in Saitama, Japan, and the discussions that a few Board Members had at that time. I am also sending you two reports that were considered in Saitama, one from Oxford University Press and one from the Journal.

The reports were considered by both the outgoing and incoming Councils of IEA. We have enjoyed strong support from Dame Valerie Beral and the immediate-past Council and I was delighted by the encouragement of the new Council and the new president Professor Henrique Barros.

**Composition of the Editorial Board**

Concern was expressed by the new Council that many of the new members of the Board hailed from Australasia! This is true and I pointed out that we had to reconstitute the Board rapidly upon assuming responsibility for the Journal and so drew on people we knew to be capable and willing to assist. Recently we have been able to explore who might be available from other places and appoint several. I attach a list of current Board members and their interest for your perusal (and correction where appropriate!). I am especially keen to invite people from low- and middle-income countries. All suggestions welcome.

**Backlog**

We are doing well in reducing the backlog of papers and moving to the timely production of issues. Cohort Profiles are now published in full on-line with a summary in print. We solved the problem of a backlog of really old Cohort Profiles (most of which would have had to be published in full in print) by listing them in an issue’s contents list as epages (as they’d long since been published online), publishing nothing further about these in print. We were urged to examine whether the same principle may be applied to the backlog of original articles. This is under discussion: with the increased print space
available after the cohort profiles have been published online, the backlog might be manageable through the standard issue process.

**Meetings of the Editorial Board**

With nearly 50 members now it is unlikely that we will have opportunities to meet as a full Board. We must take advantage of regional meetings to bring local members of the Board together. This is an important concern, but even meetings as small as the one in Saitama (we had six members and Allen Stevens of OUP present) can be very productive and, frankly, nothing beats face-to-face discussions.

At the Incoming Council meeting I asked the IEA Council to consider additional funding to support a meeting of a few members of the Editorial Board in 2018. I was asked to prepare a brief and a business case. While a meeting in association with a regional gathering has merits, my view is that the meeting next year should be in Oxford in association with our publisher OUP.

At the Editorial Strategy Meeting in Sydney in March we agreed to form a small Editorial Advisory Committee (EAC) with the Editor-in-Chief, a representative from each of the IEA Council and OUP, and two members of the Editorial Board. Dame Valerie agreed to represent the IEA Council and Allen Stevens OUP. Emily Banks agreed to serve from the Editorial Board and I would be pleased to hear from other Board members who would like to serve on the EAC. This group, together with several others who may be able to join us in Oxford (probably in the first half of 2018) would be the participants in the Editorial Board meeting in Oxford next year. I would hope that the four members of the Sydney-based editorial team would be able to attend as well, with their costs paid for independently of IEA and *IJE*. I welcome comments from Board members about these proposals.

**The need for extended international reach**

Feelings run high about the difficulties experienced in extending the reach of the *IJE* to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). A glance at the countries from which submissions are received (see attached reports) indicates the extent of this problem. There are multiple causes – they extend from deficits in infrastructure for epidemiological research in many LMICs through language problems to what are perceived as prejudices. Several of these causes are within the gift of the *IJE* to address while several are beyond our reach.
Discussion has centred on encouraging epidemiological research workers to avail themselves of resources available online that provide educational material on writing and submitting research papers, providing more material of immediate educational benefit through a revamped Education (currently Education Corner) section, and contributing to educational sessions at regional meetings that assist epidemiological research workers in composing their contributions to the *IJE*. We already have a section of the journal intermittently devoted to methods and methodology and this could be thoughtfully expanded to take account of the needs of LMICs.

Dick Heller, who looks after the Education Corner, has proposed that we invite contributions in two categories, Reflections on Modern Methods and Educational Notes. The first would be articles that comment on established methods that are currently frequently misused or misinterpreted or explore recent cutting-edge methods explaining their use, purpose, range and limitations. They would not concentrate on new or untried methods in epidemiology.

The second category, Educational Notes, could be material that would be useful for undergraduate or postgraduate students in epidemiology or public or population health.

Board member Onyi Arah has suggested that we look at educational papers published in *Statistics in Medicine* that ask the authors to demonstrate their use with examples.

In addition, we are considering inviting research proposals in the form of expressions of interest from authors in LMICs and, through our office and with help from the Editorial Board, helping them with questions of design, measurement and analysis relevant to a proposed paper.

I would be interested in hearing from Board members with ideas about how this matter could be further progressed.

**Expectations of Board members**

We are immensely grateful for the contributions you make to *IJE*. The quality of what you do and also the quality of many reviews is truly outstanding. Nevertheless, problems have arisen with long delays and these trouble us as they are unfair to the authors. We ask if you anticipate delays that you let us know. I realise that ScholarOne poses problems for several of you and we can
help you master it but we cannot regularly provide you with an alternative pathway to access manuscripts, manage peer review or submit recommendations. Our resources do not stretch that far. So please, if you feel the demands of Board membership are too onerous, let us know and we can search for a person to replace you.

We run into trouble, though, when timelines are not met. Guidelines for the maximum timeframes within which we would like new manuscripts dealt with are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Target timeframe*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AE assesses whether the paper should proceed and agrees or declines to handle it (notifying the <em>IJE</em> office is only necessary if declining)</td>
<td>Within 3 days of receiving assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE selects and invites reviewers (or makes an immediate recommendation if review not required)</td>
<td>Within 7 days of receiving assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE ensures the required number of reviewers (usually 2) have been assigned (ie, have accepted the invitation)†</td>
<td>Within 14 days of receiving assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE has received sufficient reviews to make a recommendation</td>
<td>Within 35 days of first review invitations being sent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AE makes recommendation</td>
<td>Within 7 days of all reviews received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIC confirms recommendation and <em>IJE</em> office conveys decision to authors</td>
<td>Within 2 days of recommendation received</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Timeframes may vary, particularly those dependent on reviewer availability, but these are the maximum targets that should be aimed for.

† This may require regularly checking in to see if new reviewer invitations are needed (if all reviewers invited to date have declined or not responded) until the required number have agreed.

AE = Associate Editor. EIC = Editor-in-Chief.
We also hope that we can use your experience in formulating editorial policy.

**Staying in touch**

To enable open discussion among members we have established a Slack account
(https://join.slack.com/t/IJEeditors/shared_invite/MjM1NzcwOTEzOTIyLTE1MDQ1MDc4NDMtMWE3MGZlNGUzMg

This link will expire on 4 October; please contact the Editorial office if you need a new link. Here you can post ideas and respond to those of fellow Board members. I look forward to conversing with you in Slackspace!

Warm wishes

Steve