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## Editorial

### The Case Report

Eighty-four Case Reports were submitted to The Journal during the first three months of this year. Each of these manuscripts was reviewed by at least two Editors, Associate Editors, or Consultant Reviewers of The Journal. Following this review process, fourteen of these reports were accepted for publication, and seventy were not. This rate of acceptance is similar to the rate in 1986 when 16 per cent of the 338 Case Reports that were submitted were accepted for publication.

The purpose of a Case Report is to report new information about a rare or unusual condition, a new or improved method of diagnosis of a particular condition, or a new or improved method of treatment of a particular condition. The report should be succinct and should include new information that will teach a lesson to the reader. Since the reasons for not accepting many of the submitted Case Reports are similar, and since the preparation of these manuscripts and their review represent a major expenditure of time and energy on the part of the authors, the reviewers, and The Journal, it seems reasonable to discuss the major reasons that lead to the rejection of these reports so that authors may consider them before deciding to prepare a Case Report for submission to The Journal.

Since Case Reports should include new educational material the report of a rare injury that is easily diagnosed and for which the treatment is obvious is seldom accepted on the basis of the rarity of the lesion alone. Either the diagnosis must have been obscure, or the treatment must not have been obvious. The mere fact that the diagnosis was missed when it should have been considered on the basis of the patient's findings is not a reason for publication of a particular case. Similarly, the report of yet another rare organism in a previously unsuspected location is seldom accepted for publication. The same is true for the report that describes a well known tumor in a new location. The fact that the tumor has occurred there is not enough. The report should contain information that will help the reader to make a diagnosis that he or she would not have suspected or supply information to treat the patient in a more expeditious manner than he or she otherwise would have. The report of a new operation performed in one patient, while often intriguing, is seldom accepted. Here, adequate follow-up of at least two years is required, and the use of the procedure in a series of patients is suggested.

While The Journal does, on occasion, accept Case Reports when it is suggested by the reviewers that the reader will benefit from an awareness article, the quality of the review, the educational value of the material, the time that has elapsed since the entity was last reported, and the new information included in the manuscript are considered when the decision regarding publication is being made.

While each reader will, I am sure, be able to find Case Reports that represent exceptions to the described guidelines, the author of a Case Report should remember that the Editor keeps these guidelines in mind when making a decision regarding the publication of a Case Report. Each Case Report should contain information of educational value that will allow the reader to evaluate, diagnose, and care for his or her patients better.

*Henry R. Cowell, M.D., Ph.D.*  
Editor