

Academic writing in radiology

Ian C Duncan

FF Rad (D) SA

*Spiro, Wilson, Duncan and Fourie, Inc.
Sunninghill Hospital, Sandton
Unitas Interventional Unit, Centurion*

For many South African radiologists the production of a scientific article within our field may seem like an insurmountable task, or worse still one not even worth contemplating at all. This became readily apparent to me when compiling this particular edition of the *SAJR* in that the only articles available for review and publication, barring two-and-a-half, were my own. In the struggle to man the academic departments and state hospitals or cope with the frantic daily hyperactivity of private practice, the writing of articles has largely fallen by the wayside. With the exception of the thesis requirements for certain of the university MMed degrees there is little or no teaching of or encouragement for academic writing in radiology in current-day South Africa. And yet as my research for this issue has shown all is not lost as a number of local radiologists continue to make highly significant written contributions to the body of radiological knowledge, both locally and overseas. Academic writing is not some mysterious skill enjoyed by only a select few. Like any other it is one developed through trial and error and ongoing experience. The necessary material is available to us all. Every day at work we see those fascinating or unusual conditions or excellent examples of more common conditions. These cases may be shared among colleagues in the same reporting room, or later at a departmental or interdisciplinary meeting, tutorial or even at a local or international conference. Some may find their way into departmental or practice film libraries, and are often forgotten about; many end up in individual 'collections'; a few end up as examination cases.

The tragedy is that these highly instructive cases are usually only ever shared among a few. Publishing them in a journal allows a much wider exposure to a far greater audience. This is certainly not the insurmountable task that it seems.

In this issue, which is dedicated to this subject of academic writing in radiology, we take a look at some of the motivations behind this activity with some tips on how to get started in article writing and publication. We also pay tribute to some of the contributions made in recent years by local radiologists to the international radiological literature. May these enthuse you with the desire to start writing if you have never done so, to try again if you have tried and failed, or to aspire to greater academic contributions if you are already a seasoned writer. Give it a try. You will be amazed at what you can achieve.

Some changes to the format of the *SAJR* will be noted, including the introduction of a letters section and more formal instructions for authors. The *Journal* is itself in a transition process, with the intention that if so desired by the local radiological community it could eventually become a properly peer-reviewed and accredited journal. Professor Coert de Vries, head of the Department of Radiology at the UOVS, has been appointed Managing Editor of the *SAJR* and will oversee its running in the future.

Ian Duncan

Editor