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A Fable

*In the middle of my life's journey,
I awoke alone in a dense forest.*

The Divine Comedy
Inferno: Canto I
— DANTE

As I was proceeding through the thicket, I encountered an old wise man who said "How would you like to be the editor-in-chief of a medical journal?" Since I had never been such a thing, I asked: "What is involved in this task?"

The wise man responded: "As editor-in-chief, you will be deluged with manuscripts from all over the world. They will arrive every day. Your job is to determine their fate."

"How do I do that?"

"Well, you can simply damn them; that is reject them, but that is a dangerous thing to do. Alternately, you could accept them quickly, but there is also peril in that course."

"So what do I do?"

"The best course is something called peer review."

"Peer review? What is that?"

"We're not really sure. You just send some manuscripts to other people who have submitted manuscripts."

"Why do I do that?"

"Well, it gives you time to think. Anyway, some manuscripts get lost or are destroyed by the reviewers."

"What happens to the others?"

"It's not entirely clear. The reviewers hold on to them for a long time. Even though they may be very busy writing their own manuscripts, they like to be asked to read and review other manuscripts. The interesting thing is that although they like to be asked to review, and will complain if you do not ask them, they frequently will not read the manuscripts."

"Why do they do that?"

"We're not sure. It only takes a few hours to read and review the manuscript, but they just keep putting it off. And it seems that some mechanism keeps them from saying that they are too busy to read the manuscript or to suggest that another colleague read it instead."

"That does not make sense."

"It does not make sense to us either, but that is what they do. They just like to get the manuscripts. Eventually, however, some reviewers actually send back the articles with recommendations that the authors revise the manuscript."

"Do they always advise changes?"

"Always. How would it look if you were asked to criticize and you did not?"

"Oh, I get it. Well, what happens next?"

"You send it back to be revised."

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Part of the effective planning that contributed to efficient implementation was the initiation of recruitment efforts in June, for those positions held by staff whom SNM knew did not plan to move. Consequently, several key positions were filled before the actual moves, ensuring no gap in service, and individuals in these positions had the opportunity to benefit from orientation by departing staff. More than 20 new staff have been hired.

Renewed Energy for the Future

The move and the new environment have injected a renewed energy into the Society. The openness, the natural beauty and the functional nature of the space have enhanced the productivity of an already productive and enthusiastic

staff. Leaving long-time friends and colleagues was a bittersweet experience, but new staff members quickly integrated with existing staff, and the new SNM family is working efficiently and effectively. Moreover, one of the goals of the move—to reduce costs—already is being met. For the fiscal year beginning October 1, 1994, the Society cut operating costs by \$209,000 by virtue of the move.

The long journey initiated in 1991 has culminated in a prestigious office space that will save SNM substantial sums while creating an environment for change in which the Society's critical new initiatives can be tackled productively and effectively.

Maryanne Shanahan

NEWS BRIEFS

International Suppliers of Molybdenum-99 Expand

Although worldwide production of ⁹⁹Mo is commonly assumed to lie solely with AECL/Nordion International, Inc., Canada, a European firm—the National Institute of Radioelements (IRE)—has also been a longtime supplier. And when Mallinckrodt Medical's forthcoming production facility opens in 1995 (see *Newsline* July 1994,

p.25N), the resulting increase in international suppliers of this essential radioisotope may help calm fears of a possible shortfall.

An IRE spokesperson pointed out that the firm's Belgium-based plant, in operation since 1978, represents an alternative outlet for U.S. nuclear medicine physicians and scientists in obtaining ⁹⁹Mo.

The IRE operation encompasses a purification plant and relies on irradiation of targets in four European research reactors. Distribution, however, remains

in the hands of Nordion Europe (NESA), with most of the company's production sold through NESA, which negotiates distribution agreements and market prices with potential consumers.

IRE's weekly production slightly exceeds 1,000 Ci, with possible increases in total capacity up to 3,000 Ci per week if a shortage were to occur. The two companies signed an agreement in 1993 in an effort to ensure a sustained supply of ⁹⁹Mo, the terms of which provide for back-up if one or the other source experiences failure. ■

A Fable

(continued from page 3A)

"Does that take care of it?" "No way. Although the authors claim that they are eager to get their manuscript published, they usually take a long time to make changes and return the revised manuscript. Eventually, though, some revised manuscripts are returned."

"What happens then?"

"Well, that is when you have to make the decision to accept or reject the papers. Of course, you could have them reviewed again. That will start the cycle all over."

"It sounds like fun."

"No, it is not. Everyone will complain regardless of what you do. If you reject a manuscript, the authors will complain. If you accept them, the readers will complain about the manuscripts you accept."

"It seems very frustrating. Why should I want to do this?"

"If you do it, you can write one page each month on whatever topic comes to mind."

"When do I start?"

— December 1994

Stanley J. Goldsmith, MD, Editor-in-Chief

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