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The *Bulletin* in 2001

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2001 is when the new millennium really starts, according to some. Whether we agree or not, issue 1, year 1, is a good place and time to take stock of the evolution of the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*. With the support of our contributors, referees and readers, we have made considerable progress over the past two years. The rigorous selection procedures we introduced in 1999 have raised both the quality and the quantity of material available to publish. The appearance and timeliness of the journal have been steadily improving as well. In both content and production, we are going from strength to strength.

A great help in achieving this has been the special theme issues published throughout the year 2000 (see box). Leading experts on the selected subjects contributed to planning, writing and evaluating the material. The result has been an important contribution by the *Bulletin* to international thinking and planning in these areas.

Themes in 2000

Inequalities in health (January)
Immunization safety (February)
Polio eradication (March)
Mental health (April)
Reproductive health (May)
Health systems (June)
Tobacco (July)
Environment and health (September)
Child mortality (October)
Malaria (December).

Themes planned for 2001

Blindness and eye diseases (March)
Public/private partnerships for drugs and vaccines (June)
Globalization (September)
Noncommunicable diseases (October)
Poverty (November)

A hidden but formidable strength of the *Bulletin* is its peer reviewers, of whom the list for last year is published on pages 83–84. Each article that comes in is read first

by a member of the editorial team, then by a member of the Editorial Committee. Then, if they think it has any potential at all for being publishable, it goes out to at least two referees, who carefully assess the validity of its methods and findings. If any of the authors of a given article are WHO staff members, both referees have to be non-WHO. Otherwise, one of the referees can be a staff member, but not both. The referees' comments are often highly perceptive, detailed and extensive. They are used by a subgroup of the Editorial Committee in deciding on publication, and are then sent to the authors to inform their future work. On behalf of the *Bulletin*, we would like to thank all our authors and referees very warmly for their invaluable support.

This year we intend to do five more theme issues (see box) — half as many as last year, so that we can speed up the publication time for the other excellent material we are receiving. In addition, we will be publishing smaller clusters of articles on selected topics. So far, ethics and the HIV/AIDS pandemic are on our list. Since there are few more important tasks than placing health at the centre of the debate on economic policy and development, health economics will continue to be a key topic for the *Bulletin*. The theme issues on globalization and poverty will provide an excellent opportunity for examining the issues involved. A promising source of cutting-edge analysis during 2001 will be the work of the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, set up by WHO's Director-General at the beginning of last year. We will be following its work with keen interest.

Readers may have noticed that the *Bulletin* is evolving in other ways as well, to provide a fuller picture of what is happening in public health around the world. Our news section is expanding, both in the number of items covered and the amount of detail provided. A section entitled "WHO news" has been added, since many of you want to know about developments in the Organization's work. There will also be more interviews with people playing a special role in public health, and more "perspectives",

in which a health issue is discussed more briefly and informally than in our main articles. A page entitled "In this month's *Bulletin*" has been added, drawing attention to what we think are the most important or interesting articles in the current issue. We will also be publishing occasional obituaries and profiles of key figures in public health.

Research, Policy and Practice, Round Table, Public Health Classics, News, Books, and Letters will continue to form the backbone of the *Bulletin*. The public health classic section has been particularly successful, providing a much appreciated historical perspective on current events and developments. Not only in content but in appearance, articles from previous decades, with their different typeface and format, add to the sense of adventure of health work in a rapidly changing world. In this regard the quality of the *Bulletin* has improved in subtler ways as well during the past year, with the addition of colour on the printed page, to enhance the clarity of the tables, figures and general layout. This led to a further question, of how best to maintain the authors' reprint service without undue expense and inconvenience. We have started sending authors the printer's PDF file of their articles instead of a package of printed pages. Details of this and other changes affecting authors are published in our revised Guidelines for contributors on pages 85–86.

We look forward to a year of further innovation and improvement. We would like in particular to expand the Letters section and increase the number of Perspectives, so please feel uninhibited about writing to us. Your reactions, suggestions and points of view are of great interest and value. We also encourage you to write to us with any comments you have on the *Bulletin* as it is today or as you would like it to be in the future. This will help to keep us on our upward trajectory. We wish all our readers and contributors a happy and productive year 1 of the new millennium. ■

¹ Editor-in-Chief.

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