

## Editorial

The electronic revolution is having an ever-increasing influence on scientific publishing. The most important service up to now has been rapid and powerful searching of databases for papers according to key words, and retrieval of bibliographic information and abstracts. The last year or two has seen the availability of the full text of some journals, sometimes made freely available by publishers in order to generate sufficient interest to encourage paid subscriptions when charging begins at a later date. However, the commercial publishers' plans are now being threatened by organisations proposing to make scientific publications freely available via the internet, planning to pay their way by advertising. In the near future the Nutrition Society will have to make important decisions on how to organise its publishing and protect its income to serve best its members and the community of nutritionists.

What has this got to do with *Nutrition Research Reviews*? Maybe many subscribers will want to continue to receive printed copies as they use them regularly in the preparation of lectures or simply to keep up with developments in nutrition while travelling to work by train or bus, or relaxing in the evening. Please let us know your views on electronic v. paper publishing in science ([j.m.forbes@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:j.m.forbes@leeds.ac.uk)).

In this issue Calder & Jackson (2000), in their review of nutrition and infectious diseases, give us a striking example of the way in which nutritional knowledge can help to save lives and improve the quality of life of millions of people worldwide. It would be tempting to say that most other aspects of nutritional research are trivial in comparison but only by a multi-faceted approach can we hope to understand the underlying causes and therefore the cures for such problems. The real problem, of course, is the uneven availability of food in different parts of the world and the need for agricultural production to match demand for food much more closely than it does at present.

Regular readers of *Nutrition Research Reviews* will recognise that the reviews published in any one issue do not have a common theme. However, three of the five papers in this issue are concerned with the value of minor constituents of plants in the diet. First, Grivetti & Ogle (2000) discuss the potential of wild plants to provide a variety of nutrients. The authors do not give us long lists of plant species and their nutrient contents but provide an insight into the range of sources of literature on the subject. They also highlight the gaps in the literature and the battle to obtain recognition for what have been considered by many nutritionists and agriculturists to be merely weeds.

Wills *et al.* (2000) consider medicinal herbs in general and use echinacea, valerian and St John's wort as widely-used examples. They describe the current resurgence of interest in, and use of, herbs both in traditional medicine and their increasing acceptance in conventional medicine.

Plant polyphenols have been proposed to prevent cancer and heart disease, but Duthie *et al.* (2000) can only find support for the latter proposition. They deal in detail with the biochemistry of this group of compounds, giving us a valuable example of the interface between detailed biological chemistry and practical nutrition.

From time to time we publish a review which centres on a technique or family of techniques which are very influential in enabling advances in nutritional understanding. The description and discussion of indirect methods for monitoring food intake and diet selection at pasture by Mayes & Dove (2000) illustrates how detailed measurements can be made on

free-living animals. They not only tell us about the techniques but also summarise the accuracy and precision under a variety of field conditions. It is likely that the approaches adopted with herbivores could be adapted to studies with other types of animal, including human beings.

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### References

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