

Online submission to the *Netherlands Journal of Medicine*: embracing the electronic future

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Some six months after the introduction of open access for the *Netherlands Journal of Medicine*, the Editorial Board wishes to implement another change.¹ Until now, we have mostly put our trust in surface mail for the delivery of manuscripts and for all our contacts with reviewers and authors. Over the last year, however, we have noticed an increased use of electronic mail in communication with authors and reviewers. Some authors already use electronic mail for submission of manuscripts. These facts argue for the internet as favoured medium for communication and as a consequence we have decided to step in.

From 1 February onwards we will be implementing an online submission system for both authors and editors of the *Netherlands Journal of Medicine*. We have decided to use the software package 'Manuscript Central', a web-based submission and peer-review system. This system has the advantage that over 1000 biomedical journals use it and that it is widely known among authors and reviewers. It is easy to use and offers maximum convenience to authors and editors. The system supports the complete process of submitting and reviewing manuscripts, as well as the correspondence between authors, editorial office and the reviewers. Manuscript Central requires no additional preparation beyond having your manuscript files in an electronic format: text can be submitted as Microsoft Word. In addition graphics can either be embedded in the word-processed document or uploaded separately, for example as a joint photographic experts group (JPEG) file or as a tagged image file format (TIFF) file. The text and graphic files are automatically converted into an adobe portable document format (PDF) document for distribution and review. After verification by the corresponding author, the system generates immediate confirmation by electronic mail. In addition, the status of the manuscript can be tracked as it moves through the peer-review process. Once the Editors have reached a decision regarding the manuscript the authors will be updated immediately. Subsequent revisions, if required, will be handled online in a similar fashion. Likewise, peer review will also be an online process. We will invite

a reviewer from our panel of referees by electronic mail to review the manuscript which will be made available online as a PDF file from the same website. The system has clear rewards; its use will enhance the administrative efficiency and shorten the handling time of manuscripts. In the end, this will further decrease the lag time between submission and final publication in the Journal.

The consequence of this move is that the Editorial Office will not handle conventional mail submissions from 1 february 2006 onwards. Full instructions for manuscript submission are available on the website at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/nethjmed>.

We have thoroughly tested the system and we do not anticipate any problems, but authors who experience technical difficulties may contact the Editorial Office via electronic mail.

During the last year the Journal has witnessed many changes.² As recently reiterated, the number of people accessing and downloading papers published in the *Netherlands Journal of Medicine* has progressively increased since the introduction of the full text online version of the Journal.³ We feel that by embracing the new technology the Journal has obtained the competitive edge. We invite you as reader to be part of our Journal by submitting your clinical observations and/or fruits of your research to us. The benefits for authors publishing in the Journal are clear: because of open access the widest possible dissemination of your work is possible. Therefore, we encourage you to submit your manuscripts online at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/nethjmed>.

REFERENCES

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