

Albert, T.: **Winning the Publications Game.** - Radcliffe Medical Press, Oxford - New York 1997. ISBN 1 85775183 3. 89 pp., USD 15.00.

This is, fortunately, the briefest guide-book for greenhorns in scientific writing I have ever read. The reader can get through it in one afternoon if he does not obey the warnings that "before proceeding to Chapter 6, you should have...", *etc.* The target readers are mainly surgeons and physicians who (according to Tim Albert) start their career as scientific writers mainly when they wish (p. 11) to "become a professor before the age of 38" (for this goal only three papers in prestigious journals should be needed - this is certainly less than in a Middle European university - God save England!).

Simple advice leads the inexperienced researcher from the first impulse to becoming a published author (subtitle of the booklet is "How to get published without neglecting your patients"). O.K., the booklet deals with all what is necessary, sometimes too briefly, sometimes too lengthy. But also experienced authors will get some new information, *e.g.*, on key dates in the evolution of scientific publishing (p. 4), on citation reports and impact factors (pp. 18-19), on exact requirements of the Vancouver Group of editors (pp. 21, 27, 29, 30-32, 61, 64-66, 68), on some analyses of original papers in the British Medical Journal (pp. 27, 51-52), on stupid starting sentences of articles (p. 33), *etc.* Also some recommendations may help, such as "only one message per article", and how to make the Fog Score, The yellow marker test, and the First six words test.

The author chose funny examples for illustration. Thus throughout the manual mainly one paper is being prepared for publication: "Prevalence of post-lunchtime amnesia among doctors in UK hospitals: results of a cross-sectional survey". (I would like to ask the respective scientists of the Departments of Prandiology to broaden their research: the illness is wide-spread even among those who search photosynthesis anywhere in the world.) Some bad examples are also fairly good, such as "Two bee whore knot two bee...". I am pleased that the author uses proper names for facts, *e.g.*, he calls finding adequate journal and curious readers "marketing, market".

Six of the ten chapters of the paperback book end with a bookchoice: always one proper manual from the wide choice of literature is briefly reviewed (stressing what to find there). In addition, nine books and five articles are cited in the list of references on pp. 85-86. A good subject index helps in orientation.

I do not agree only with few recommendations. Thus I prefer placing explanatory matter in the table heading, not in footnotes. During 30 years of my editorial practice I have received only few submission letters signed by all authors - is this really necessary? (p. 79).

In summary: The text is brief, the take-home message clear. A good first advice to beginners in scientific writing, and not only in medicine

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