EDITORIAL VIEWS

Accept, Revise, Reject or Punt: An Example of the Latter

The two lead articles appearing in this issue\(^1\)\(^2\) and the accompanying editorial\(^3\) provide a striking example of one type of dilemma encountered by editors of medical (and I suppose other) journals. The reader might well wonder why we publish work which is accompanied by an invited editorial that for the most part criticizes such publication. It is simply because the peer review system in this instance failed to provide any clear judgment regarding the merits of the work. Instead, multiple qualified reviewers, including specialists in anesthesia, neonatology, psychology, and pediatric neurology, provided diverse opinions ranging from laudatory to the view expressed in Tronick's editorial.\(^3\) Rejection of the manuscripts would have been an arbitrary condemnation of the work while publication requires that the opposing viewpoint be published as well.

Publication of work in a journal such as Anesthesiology is commonly (and properly) viewed as a form of endorsement. When it is not such, the reader must be so informed. In the case of the work by Amiel-Tison et al.,\(^1\)\(^2\) it seems clear that additional studies will be required to determine the validity and sensitivity of their neonatal examination. They offer a simple approach and suggest a number of practical applications. Tronick\(^3\) identifies the potential pitfalls and predicts that sensitivity (and perhaps validity) will be found wanting. Clearly, this work is just entering its developmental phase. Publication, however, should not await maturation. Instead, the considerable experience and recognized expertise of Dr. Amiel-Tison and her co-authors should be made available to our readers. Hopefully, many will be stimulated to apply and evaluate their proposed neonatal examination. Determination of the validity, sensitivity and merits of the examination will follow.

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References

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