

EDITORIAL



Medical Information as a Duty: from the Scientific Community to the General Public

The French Society for Otorhinolaryngology (FSO) has decided to create an independent, peer-reviewed journal published in both French and English to serve as a voice for scientific excellence throughout the international community of otorhinolaryngologists. This decision is welcome indeed.

Those of us who travel extensively know that the French school of otorhinolaryngology enjoys considerable renown in the European Union, Latin America, and Eastern European countries. Linguistic barriers and the absence of an English-language journal speaking for French otorhinolaryngology have hindered the dissemination of French concepts within the English-speaking otorhinolaryngological community. Change is on the way, however. Young otorhinolaryngologists in France are rapidly befriending the English language, and the new bilingual journal created by the FSO will provide them with a sounding board to disseminate their scientific findings.

This journal will publish high-quality scientific papers. The edition in French will further strengthen the reputation of French otorhinolaryngology within the francophone community. The edition in English will carry this reputation to North America, the United Kingdom, Asia, and the Anglophone communities in the Mediterranean region.

This new journal is a challenge. To succeed, we need enthusiastic participation from all researchers, hospital-based clinicians, and private practitioners. Together, we must strive to produce original work of sufficient quality to engage the international community. We will succeed, thanks to the diversity and excellence of the groups working throughout our country, in the fields of rhinology, pediatrics, oncology, otoneurology, laryngology, head and neck cancers, and plastic surgery.

This journal is a valuable opportunity for young otorhinolaryngologists working to build a teaching-hospital career. The 0.5 impact factor and dual publication in French and English will considerably increase their chances of gaining international recognition.

Finally, for French or Francophone otorhinolaryngologists, this journal will be a unique channel for disseminating a wide range of medical information, thereby contributing to ensure the high-quality continuing medical education we all want to receive.

Informing our patients and the general public is an essential duty. Today, people hunger for honest information. Patients want the knowledge they need to assess their situation calmly and to make the decisions that serve them best. Otorhinolaryngologists must provide their patients with confidential, high-quality,

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and abundant information on the diagnosis, treatment options and burdens, and the risk/benefit ratio of the management strategies we recommend. To assist in this task, several organizations have recommended the use of patient information and consent forms, which can be modified as desired by each individual surgeon.

Finally, otorhinolaryngologists share with physicians in other fields a duty to the media. We must provide the media with sound scientific facts to satisfy their curiosity about medical advances and hopes for better diagnostic or therapeutic tools. Radio and television programs, health magazines, weekly news magazines and other publications both respond to and amplify the public's craving for information about health matters. We should inform the media with humility and restraint, tact and moderation, as recommended by the Board of Physicians. This task is delicate at best, perilous at worst. How much should we say? Where is the line between information and advertising or self-promotion? The wisest course is probably to communicate with the media only about issues discussed in high-quality articles published in scientific journals such as ours.

The adverse effects of inaccurate information communicated by the media over the last few years constitute a reminder that medicine has a distinctive ethical component. Ethical considerations must be our beacon. May we walk toward it at all times.

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