

From the Editor's desk

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ONLINE SUBMISSION HAS ARRIVED

We now have online submission for all published material to the *Journal* (please see our newly revised 'Instructions for authors' at <http://bjp.rcpsych.org/misc/ifora.shtml>). I hope this will improve our efficiency and communicating capacity and that the system we have adopted (Bench>Press by HighWire) will prove to be a friendly one for prospective authors. Above all we hope it will help our international colleagues. It still continues to amaze that we can communicate our words in an instant to any part of the world, and I look forward with great anticipation to correspondence about seasonal affective disorder in Spitzbergen and the impact of social isolation in Kerguelen Island, as much as I do to the more familiar bipolar disorder in Camberwell.

In the spirit of encouraging increased availability of data from original studies we are also giving all authors who have

their papers accepted by the *Journal* the option of giving more data in the form of tables and other formats, including abbreviated or full databases, in the web versions of their papers. We are well aware that the pressures on space prevent much data being published that probably would be included if space were ample, and this is a partial solution to the problem.

JOINING BIOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

We are well known in our discipline for squabbling among ourselves in the nature-nurture argument. Several papers in this issue show that the interaction between these is probably more important than their individual components. Michael Rutter lucidly illustrates this in his editorial (pp. 4–6), giving examples of the expression of genetic effects being dependent on the environment and also stressing the subtlety

of environmental factors (rather than their simple presence or absence) in provoking both pathology and health in the presence of biological vulnerability. Johnstone and her colleagues (pp. 18–25) add to the growing literature suggesting that the symptomatic and neurocognitive indicators of schizophrenia are present long before the first symptoms are manifest, and, as only a minority of those who are vulnerable develop the disease, environmental factors are likely to play an important role. Perhaps those wishing to intervene early in the treatment of schizophrenia should be looking for even earlier intervention. Thompson *et al* (pp. 32–40) suggest that those with bipolar affective disorder may be similarly impaired in neurocognitive function even when in a euthymic state, so it is likely again that the environment plays a critical role in triggering episodes in a biologically vulnerable group and helps to explain the recent burgeoning of interest in psychoeducation. The cultural aspects of environmental influence are illustrated by the minor epidemic of charcoal-burning suicides in Hong Kong after the colonial era ended in 1997 (Chan *et al*, 67–73); we do not know whether this group too might have been vulnerable – it may well have been – but the contribution from the media was clearly a major factor. So a psychosocial perspective almost always includes a biological horizon, and vice-versa, and we are more rounded in our understanding when we include both.