We hereby thank the 3613 peer reviewers who completed JAMA manuscript reviews in 2000 and whose names appear on pages 1078-1092. In 2000, it took an average of 44 calendar days from manuscript receipt to rejection; 117 days from receipt to acceptance; and 182 days from receipt to publication. A mean of 24 days was required for peer review; each reviewer handled an average of 2 manuscripts. Fifty-six percent of the 4366 manuscripts we received were sent for external peer review. Forty-two percent of manuscripts were rejected without external review. Two percent of accepted manuscripts (mostly invited editorials) did not have external review. The total acceptance rate for manuscripts in 2000 was 11%, and the acceptance rate for unsolicited manuscripts was 7%.
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The choice of referees is not as haphazard as some people think: they may be acknowledged experts in the specialty or known to be doing research into a particular topic; they may be members of the editorial board or part of a larger group of advisors the journal uses regularly; they may be unknown but recommended by members of the board or the group of advisors; they may be known from their authorship or important articles on the subject.

Today many editorial offices have their referees listed on a card index or a computer; this enables greater selectivity, matching a referee to an article more closely than was possible in the past, not overloading him with too many requests, and also monitoring his performance (including the time he takes and the quality of his report). I believe that some such system is likely to be fairer than the former happy go lucky practice of picking a referee out of one’s memory: it ensures that a journal uses well-known assessors whose opinions cannot be “guaranteed” in advance. True, there is the opposite argument: that an editor should choose an advisor whose biases and proclivities are well known to him. To my mind, however, such a practice has the risk of creating a charmed circle of referees whose opinions the editor can predict and can therefore determine the fate of any article from the start. There is no substitute for constantly striving to find new assessors.

—Stephen Lock

_A Difficult Balance_