Recent trends in publications in the European Journal of Epidemiology

Albert Hofman

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In this last issue of 2008 I take the opportunity to report some observations on recent trends in articles published in the EJE. In the first decade after Antonio Sanna founded the Journal in 1985 the emphasis was clearly on infectious diseases. Over half of the papers were in this category, and the methods papers generally also were on infectious diseases. This gradually changed after Claude Hannoun took over as editor-in-chief in 1995. He published a growing proportion of articles on chronic diseases, in particular cardiovascular disease. In recent years, the Journal has published increasingly papers on epidemiologic and statistical methods, on the objectives and study design of new epidemiologic studies, on genetic epidemiology, and on developmental epidemiology. Here I will review some of the highlights of the articles published in recent years, including those on infectious diseases.

Recent methods articles have addressed issues of measurement of determinants and outcome, exposure-measurement error and information bias [1–10]. We have published some work on the design and evaluation of questionnaires, in particular on assessment of physical activity. We also have published important articles on causal modelling, on confounding, and on effect-modification and interaction.

In our section devoted to new studies the majority of articles has been on new birth cohort studies and other studies addressing early-life causes of adult diseases, and on the biobanks organized as part of those efforts [11–17].

In genetic epidemiology we have published some meta-analyses of candidate gene studies on various diseases, and

in the near future we will undoubtedly publish the results of the major genome-wide association studies that are currently underway in many epidemiologic research groups [18–22]. In addition, we have published commentaries on the value, of lack thereof, of predictive genetic testing for complex diseases and more in general on the promises of translational research in genomics.

We have published a substantial number of studies in developmental epidemiology, addressing fetal and other early life determinants of adult diseases [23–34]. This involved in particular studies of low birth weight and cardiovascular disease and diabetes, in different ethnic populations, and under different nutritional conditions. Increasingly, hemodynamic and endocrinological studies have addressed the hypothesis of early life causes of adult diseases. We have also published on the new studies in this field and on the epidemiologic resources that are now being build-up for future developmental epidemiologic studies.

The Journal publishes still a substantial number of articles on infectious diseases, about ten per cent of all published papers [35–55]. The largest number of articles in recent years has been on HIV/AIDS and on hepatitis, and quite often on their interrelations. We have also published work on new methods in infectious disease epidemiology, and on their applications to diseases like tuberculosis, malaria and meningitis. We will continue to emphasize the publication of important epidemiologic studies on infectious diseases in the Journal.

The EJE has become more selective over the years. In the first decade of its existence about half of the manuscripts that came to the office were published. In recent years this has gone down to about 15%, reflecting both a substantially larger number of manuscripts received and a stricter acceptance policy. In this the editors have been strongly supported by the work for the Journal of many

A. Hofman (✉)
Department of Epidemiology, Erasmus Medical Center,
P.O. Box 2040, 3000 CA Rotterdam, The Netherlands
e-mail: a.hofman@erasmusmc.nl

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