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Book review

CBE Style Manual. 5th edn. Pp. 326. US\$24.00. Council of Biology Editors, 9650 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, Maryland 20814, USA. 1983.

Success in medicine depends much on communicating through the written word. For those wishing to get ahead there is thus a strong case for adopting a professional approach to authorship. Facility in writing varies greatly, but, while practice is a great improver, there are also many publications offering helpful advice. What then should stand on the desk of the medical author and, for that matter, the editor, referee, and publisher? For those with the leisure to savour their reading and writing, volumes such as Fowler, Roget, and the Shorter OED will need to be supplemented with tables of SI units and microbial terminology. For others with less time to spare the increasingly comprehensive instructions to authors offered by some journals provides much useful advice. There remains, however, a need for a concise reference book dealing with all aspects of medical

writing. This is admirably filled by the new edition of the *CBE Style Manual*.

The manual deals with writing in all the biological sciences, but most of it is relevant to medicine. It offers sound advice about the ethical aspects of authorship and publication; preparation of manuscripts, tables, and illustrations; prose style, including a list of common errors; technical style conventions; indexing; proof correction; refereeing ('Test the critique for fairness and objectivity by asking yourself if you would be willing to sign it and send it to the author'). The style of the manual itself is North American, but throughout it draws attention to differences between British and American usage, and these comparisons make interesting reading. The authors might have commented on how the simpler North American spelling avoids that most common error in British medical writing, the insertion of an inappropriate diphthong (as in *thrombocytopaenia* for *thrombocytopenia*). All in all, this is an excellent publication: concise, yet comprehensive and entertaining. I recommend it.

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