

## The PAJAMA affair: a case study

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### **The situation**

The editor of the Pandoran and Androvian Journal of Associated Medical Affairs (PAJAMA) is leaving. The journal is owned by the Medical Association of Pandora and Androvia, two little-known European states. The Chief Executive is Dr Pierre Battaille, an ex-French foreign legion surgeon and former head of Medical Communications at the EC. The Association had been losing money and he was recruited 18 months ago to revitalise it.

### **The reason for the dismissal**

The Chief Executive issued the following statement: *'We regret to announce that Dr Albert Horton-Smith, Editor of PAJAMA, has decided for personal reasons to relinquish the chair that he has held in such a distinguished manner for the past 27 years. The Executive Committee of the Pandoran and Androvian Medical Society have reluctantly accepted his decision and would like to pay tribute to Dr Horton-Smith's enormous contribution'*.

### **The case for the Editor**

- Dr Horton-Smith has not resigned at all. He has been dismissed for 'gross misconduct'. This consisted of rejecting, on three separate occasions, instructions from Dr Battaille to publish an article describing the Association's web site.
- It was always understood that, as editor, he had complete editorial freedom and therefore the right to turn down material.
- The Association's web pages have been sponsored by advertising companies, who receive glowing reports on their products in return.

- Dr Horton-Smith has played a pioneering role in turning what was a small French-language journal into a major peer-reviewed English-language journal with an international reputation and an impact factor of 3.2.
- The Council of the World Association of Medical Editors has already issued a statement condemning Dr Battaille's high-handed action.

### **The case for the Chief Executive**

- While it is true that the web page has been sponsored by advertising, one of the first things Dr Battaille did was to stop this practice, a fact Dr Horton-Smith would have found out had he attended any Executive meetings.
- There have been complaints about Dr Horton-Smith's high-handed approach both from senior members of the Society's scientific committee and more junior members of staff.
- Dr Horton-Smith has consistently refused to attend Society meetings, on the grounds that it might be seen to influence his editorial decisions.
- There have been signs over the past few years that subscriptions and submissions are beginning to fall.
- Dr Horton-Smith is 73. It has proved difficult to agree his retirement because there is no contract. There is a considerable array of talent waiting in the wings.

### **Your task**

The Society is appointing a new editor. You are a member of a small working party set up by the Association to minimise the chances of such a situation occurring again.

Propose a three-point plan.

# Example exercise