

## **AuthorAID in the Eastern Mediterranean 2006 to 2011**

*Karen Shashok*

*Translator and Editorial consultant, Granada, Spain  
Co-coordinator, AuthorAID in the Eastern Mediterranean  
email: kshashok@kshashok.com*

AuthorAID in the Eastern Mediterranean (AAEM) is a volunteer project co-coordinated by Karen Shashok from Granada, Spain, and Dr Farhad Handjani from Shiraz, Iran, with support from Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. The project provides author's editors to help researchers edit manuscripts in English and get them published, trains researchers in writing and publishing skills, and offers editorial support for journals in the region. These services are provided at no cost to researchers and editors. The volunteer editors are from both sides of the Atlantic and have extensive experience in scientific, technical and medical translation, editing and writing.

The AAEM project, inspired by the AuthorAID concept<sup>1</sup> was developed by the co-coordinators after they met at the Third Regional Conference on Medical Journals in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, held in Shiraz, Iran, in 2006. The project was introduced to the members of EMAME in late 2008 at EMMJ4 in Manama, Bahrain. The first on-site phase of AAEM in Shiraz lasted from January to June, 2009. During this period several journals received support for manuscript editing, website development and training in good editorial practices. Talks and workshops about manuscript writing, editorial quality and editorial ethics were given at universities in Iran and at conferences in Iran and Cairo, Egypt. The outcomes of the first on-site phase of the project were reported in a poster at the European Association of Science Editors international conference in Pisa, Italy, in September 2009, and in articles published in international journals for professionals in scientific, technical and medical communication.<sup>2-4</sup>

Along with their edited manuscripts, authors receive feedback about language and scientific style, and pre-peer-review queries to help them improve the content and reporting as well as the use of English.<sup>5</sup> After the first on-site phase ended in mid-2009, AAEM continued to provide

manuscript editing for researchers via email. During 2010 AAEM was accepted as a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).<sup>6</sup>

In early November 2010 two AAEM workshops were organized by EMAME member Dr MK Khalid at Hamad General Hospital Education Center in Doha, Qatar. The participants were clinical researchers and editors, and the topics were successful writing and publishing strategies, and research publication ethics. The second on-site phase of AAEM began a few days later in Shiraz, and was planned to run until the end of July 2011. During this period workshops on writing and publication skills were again given for researchers, and articles about AAEM's activities were published.<sup>7-9</sup> One article, in fact, was inspired directly by conversations with colleagues during EMMJ5 in the welcoming atmosphere of the tea room at the Karachi guest residence of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to providing manuscript editing and personalized training in writing and publishing skills, AAEM has developed practical guidelines for researchers on the rules for abbreviations and reference formats. Guidelines for authors and editors were also developed in areas researchers around the world find challenging: choosing the most appropriate journal to publish in, policies on good citation practices and plagiarism, and policies on acceptable secondary publication.

To date AAEM has provided editing support for about 200 manuscripts, and has worked with several journals in the region to strengthen editorial processes. An unforeseen but interesting outcome of AAEM is that an independent research project on language usage is under development by one of the volunteer AAEM editors in Spain and an Iranian author's editor involved in AAEM work at the Center for Clinical Research Development of Nemazee Hospital in Shiraz. It is anticipated that host institutions elsewhere in the region will take advantage of the editorial support and training AAEM provides.

## REFERENCES

1. AuthorAID. Available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AuthorAID>
2. Shashok K. AuthorAID in the Eastern Mediterranean: A communication bridge between mainstream and emerging research communities. *European Science Editing* 2009; 35(3):106-108. Available at [http://www.ease.org.uk/pdfse/articles/nov09/EATW\\_correspondence106-8.pdf](http://www.ease.org.uk/pdfse/articles/nov09/EATW_correspondence106-8.pdf)

3. Shashok K. How AuthorAID in the Eastern Mediterranean helps researchers become authors. *The Write Stuff* 2010; 19 (1): 43-46. Available at [http://www.emwa.org/JournalPDFs/J\\_V19\\_I1.pdf](http://www.emwa.org/JournalPDFs/J_V19_I1.pdf)
4. Shashok K. Aiding authors in the Eastern Mediterranean. *Ethical Editing* 2010; 2(3): 5-6. Available at <http://publicationethics.org/news-letters>
5. Shashok K. Content and communication—how can peer review provide helpful feedback about the writing? *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 2008; 8(3): DOI: 10.1186/1471-2288-8-3 (31 Jan 2008) Available at <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2288/8/3>
6. Committee on Publication Ethics. Available at <http://publicationethics.org.uk>
7. Shashok K, Handjani F. Enhancing the quality of research publication: AuthorAID in the Eastern Mediterranean. *Journal of the Tehran University Heart Center* 2010; 5(4): 169-171. Available at [http://journals.tums.ac.ir/description.aspx?org\\_id=59&culture\\_var=en&journal\\_id=18&segment=en](http://journals.tums.ac.ir/description.aspx?org_id=59&culture_var=en&journal_id=18&segment=en)
8. Shashok K. Good writing and good reporting to enhance the impact of articles and journals (Editorial). *Middle East Journal of Cancer* 2011; 2(1): 151-153
9. Shashok K. Authors, editors, and the signs, symptoms and causes of plagiarism. *Saudi J Anaesthesia* 2011; in press
10. Habibzadeh F, Shashok K. Plagiarism in scientific writing: words or ideas? *Croatian Med J* 2011, 52: in press.