



EDITORIALS

Welcome to BMJ Opinion

A new space for informed debate about facts

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In this age of rampant populism, one person's fact is another person's opinion. Facts were once sacred. Now they are faked, twisted, and ignored. If we don't like your fact it becomes an opinion. If we like your opinion it becomes a fact. While we hope that our love of facts is established at *The BMJ*, we have sometimes taken a sceptical view of opinion.

But the world has changed. Opinion is no longer the domain of the ranting egotist with snake oil to sell. Opinion is now respectable, valuable, and essential. When we're struggling to make sense of these maddening times, an opinion piece can separate fact from fake fact. It can inform, inflame, and console. Importantly, it can help us organise our thinking and motivate us to take action. It can do these things quickly. Opinion can save the world, or in the wrong hands destroy it. Against this backdrop we are relaunching our popular blogs site as BMJ Opinion (<http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/>).

The BMJ took to blogs slowly. Writing in 2004, former editor Richard Smith described a trip to the World Economic Forum in Davos, commenting on everything from a talk on information overload to a speech by Dick Cheney, then vice president of the US, taking in the food and his travel. This was our first blog, and the next was published two months later. It was a further two years before Richard Lehman started a weekly review of the general medical journals. Blogging was then the currency of opinion online. It allowed people beyond the mainstream media to join local, national, and global conversations, and the world was richer for these newfound freedoms.

Although *The BMJ* was late to the delights of blogging we now publish around two or three posts a day, from a wide range of international writers across many different specialties. Recently, we've published blogs about female genital mutilation in India, China's two child policy, the difficulties and rewards of general practice in a Brazilian favela, the UK's health service crisis,

and, inevitably, the deeds and misdeeds of Donald Trump. We also feature regular contributions from patients. *The BMJ's* blogs are popular, achieving more than 50 000 page views a month.

But we can't justify calling these articles blogs anymore. Most are commissioned, and all of them are professionally edited and curated. We don't turn our online space over to a blogger and say, do what you will. Instead, these articles are best described as online opinion pieces that we can publish quickly. The speed with which we are able to publish means that we can react immediately to developing events, both in the UK and internationally, as we did with last year's UK junior doctors' strikes and Brexit vote, and are now able to do in response to Trump's divisive agenda in the United States and globally.

BMJ Opinion, our new name for *The BMJ's* blogs, offers an improved website with mobile optimisation to better feature the quality of writers and writing. For now, the url remains unchanged (<http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/>), but the pages look very different. A new BMJ Opinion homepage showcases more content, and it is now easier to find articles by author and topic. Each article is more clearly presented, and the comment function more obvious. As ever, we welcome debate on topical issues of relevance to our international medical and healthcare readership. Although facts must remain sacred, our belief is that informed opinion has its place too in propelling us towards a healthier world.

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