

From the Editor

James R. P. Ogloff
Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science
Monash University and Forensicare

As the incoming editor of the *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, I want to pay tribute to the founding editors, Ronald Roesch and Stephen Hart. In a time when there were an ever growing number of journals in areas related to mental health and the law, they decided to begin the *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*. In just five years, they established the journal as a success. It is now recognized as the leading journal in the field of forensic mental health and forensic behavioural science. A review of the articles published over the past five years reveals articles written by the leaders of our field drawn from many countries.

The ongoing success of the journal has been possible, in no small part, due to the efforts of Ron Roesch and Stephen Hart. We should be grateful to them for their vision and hard work in establishing this excellent journal. A debt is owed, as well to Derek Eaves, the founding president of the *International Association of Forensic Mental Health Services* (IAFMHS). The *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health* is the official journal of the IAFMHS. What began as a fledgling group of interested parties who first met in Vancouver, Canada has now grown into a vibrant, multidisciplinary, organization with a membership that will surely reach 1000 in the next few years. Derek Eaves was instrumental in establishing the Association and sustaining it in its early years.

Beginning in 2009, the *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health* will be published by a commercial publisher, Taylor and Francis. The journal will grow from two issues to four issues annually. This development marks an exciting crossroad for the Journal. I would like take advantage of the opportunity to ensure that as the Journal continues to grow, it develops in quality and scope. To do this, I will be consulting with the Editorial Board to contemplate any modifications to the Journal that will continue to enhance its viability and impact on the field. We will have double the number

of pages to publish the important work of those in our field. I invite Association members and readers to contact me with their ideas and suggestions regarding the direction the journal should take.

The transition to a commercial publisher will also streamline the submission, review, and publication process. This will be a benefit to authors, reviewers, and the editorial staff alike. Of greatest benefit, though, will be the exposure the resources and profile of an international publishing house can have on our journal. The goal is to attain the highest impact factor in the forensic mental health field. Such recognition will further encourage submissions from those doing the best work in forensic mental health.

A journal is only as good as the authors whose works are represented therein. To this end, I issue a call for authors to consider the *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health* as an outlet for their work. In the nine months since I have been organizing the review of manuscripts, we have had 26 submissions. While the work is drawn from 11 countries, it is still the case that most submissions come from the United States and Canada. A relatively small percentage of manuscripts are received from colleagues in Europe. Even fewer come from Australasia and almost no papers are submitted from Asia, Africa, South America, or the Indian subcontinent. I would like to particularly encourage submissions from under-represented countries and regions as I know first-hand of much of the excellent work being done in forensic mental health in countries and regions besides North America and Europe.

Beyond the desire for attracting submissions from across the globe, I would also like to see increased breadth in the manuscripts submitted. The majority of papers are still concerned with matters pertaining to the assessment of risk for violence and to psychopathy. We would benefit from work in broader fields. I hasten to add that manuscripts will continue to be accepted on the basis of a rigorous peer review and only those that meet high standards will be published. Also, I would encourage people

working in “mainstream” areas – such as risk assessment and psychopathy – to continue to send their work our way. That work has been central to the success of the journal.

Beyond origin of manuscripts and focus, I would welcome manuscripts that directly assess and contributed to law and policy across the forensic mental health field. Just as substantive topics including risk assessment are relevant to people internationally, so too are many legal and policy issues. For example, the general growth in numbers of people incarcerated and the relative disproportion of prisoners with mental illnesses raise policy and legal questions that would be of interest to people in various international jurisdictions.

The final request I would like to make at this time is to encourage submission by mental health professionals and others working in the field who represent the broad disciplines so intricately involved in forensic mental health. It is still the case that most papers are written by psychologists and psychiatrists. I would encourage papers from people with broad and diverse professional backgrounds.

Beyond the authors and editorial board members, a good journal requires excellent and responsive reviewers. Given the increasing demands placed upon us all, I have found it difficult to ascertain reviews in a timely manner. To increase the response time of the journal, I would welcome communications from those who would be willing to review manuscripts in their relevant areas. If you have established a reputation in the field, or are in the process of doing so, I would encourage you to write to me to express your willingness to review manuscripts for the journal.

By soliciting input regarding changes, and encouraging submissions from broad topics and

diverse professionals, I do not want to leave the impression that anything is deficient in the journal; it is quite the opposite. I am now forced to reject more articles than ever, many of which would make useful contributions and will doubtless be published elsewhere.

I am particularly pleased with the inaugural issue of my term as Editor. Each of the articles published in this issue of the journal makes a significant contribution. The topics covered are broad, and articles appear from Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Community forensic mental health services, prediction of risk of sexual offending taking into account ageing, psychopathy, forensic mental health patients, violence among psychiatric patients, risk assessment, media coverage of crimes committed by mentally disordered offenders, and time use in forensic psychiatric hospitals. Authors are also coming from a range of disciplines, although there is still a majority of psychologists and psychiatrists whose work appears in the current issue.

One addition has been made to the journal in this issue – the appearance of a section devoted to book reviews. Dr. Stuart Thomas, a forensic epidemiologist with a background in psychology and law, has agreed to serve as the book review editor. We are fortunate to have a book review in this issue. To this end, we would welcome review copies of new books in the field that would be suitable for review. On a select basis, book reviews that are submitted will be considered for review. Anyone wishing to submit a book review may contact Dr. Thomas for a copy of the book review guidelines (Stuart.Thomas@med.monash.edu.au).