

## ◆ *Presentation to Drummond Rennie*

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It is a distinctive honor and pleasure to introduce to you the recipient of this year's Award for Meritorious Achievement—the highest honor that the Council bestows on those who have made an outstanding contribution, who represent the values of the Council, and who serve as an inspiration to Council members.

Before I introduce the recipient, however, I would be remiss if I did not formally thank the committee members—Stephen Lock, Mary Scheetz, Thor Kommedahl, and John Overbeke—for their time, ideas, and vigorous debate. This was a multinational, multidisciplinary committee that was run at no cost to the Council; it conducted all its deliberations electronically.

The committee considered many candidates but was unanimous that this year's award should be given to long-time Council member Drummond Rennie.

Some may think Drummond needs no introduction. Surely he is one of the most well-known members of the Council, having been its president in 1996 and having been an originator of high-profile events, such as the authorship retreat that will take place during this annual meeting.

The bestowing of awards is an opportunity to reflect on what is important to us, and although most of us know *some* of Drummond Rennie's incredible contributions to science editing and to science, few people may be aware of the breadth and depth of his *many* contributions. In a short introduction I simply cannot cover *all* the noteworthy things, but I want to offer you a few highlights of the work of this incredible man.

If we step back for a moment and contemplate the current state of science, and

more particularly the biomedical research enterprise, one of its most disconcerting yet defining features today is that the integrity of science is under siege. Dispassionate, objective pursuit of truth is under siege because of an inability to effectively manage the information explosion we have experienced in the last few decades and because of conflicts of interest. For example, powerful financial conflicts of interest arise from drug development. Other conflicts of interest include personal relationships (both friend and foe), academic competition (“publish or perish”), and intellectual passion. All these things are undermining the ability of the biomedical research enterprise to produce objective data that can be used to effectively promote individual and public health.

Imagine the scientific research enterprise as a building that shelters us. The integrity and stability of the building depends on the strength of each supporting pillar. Drummond has spent his professional career supporting not one or two or three, but all the main pillars of the biomedical research enterprise. Drummond once said, “Science does not exist until it is published.” So let me identify some of the major pillars of the scientific research enterprise on the way from data creation to publication and say how Drummond has helped bolster them.

Science begins with data gathering, and this is the first place where corruption can occur. Drummond is a leading

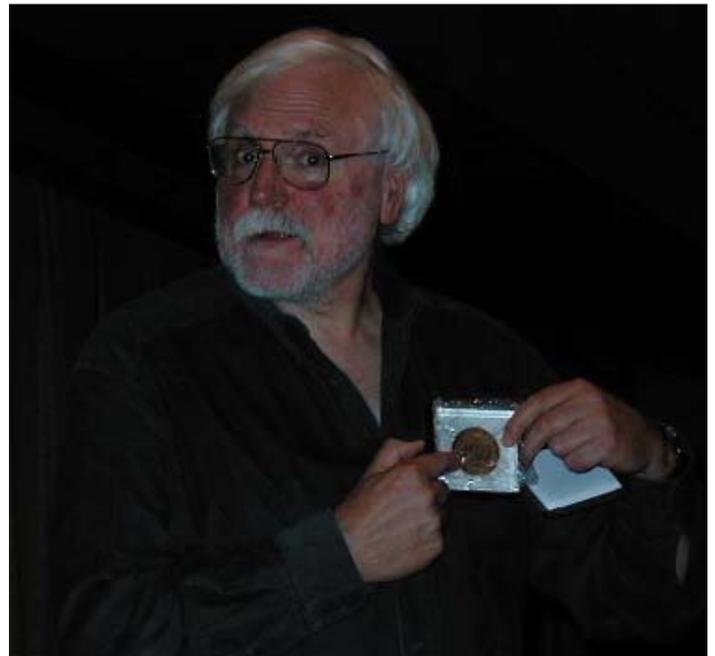


photo by Grace Darling

American advocate and expert adviser on scientific integrity. He has sat on advisory committees for the US Public Health Service and currently sits on the American Association for the Advancement of Science Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility. He was a coauthor of the report of the Committee on Research Integrity to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the House Committee on Commerce, and the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources.

Next, research must be reported, and someone must write the report. The profound contribution Drummond has made to authorship is active and continuing. He has brought to the collective consciousness the abuses of the current authorship system related to ghost and guest authorship, and he has proposed an alternative that has been adopted by a number of major medical journals and is being actively explored and studied. I hope that many of you will be able to attend the authorship retreat today—it is history in the making.

Manuscripts must then undergo peer review. It is hard to think about what we know about peer review without thinking of Drummond. He has been the father of the three international congresses on peer review, which have done more to stimulate research on peer review in the last 10 years than what had been done in the previous 50. Although peer review continues to be criticized for its many failings, Drummond has predicted that “if scholarly publication is not to degenerate into some vast and chaotic chat page, formal review by peers will form an indispensable part of whatever systems of electronic publication of science prevail.”<sup>1</sup>

Once peer review is completed, the editor has to make the final editorial decision. Drummond was a scientific editor with the *New England Journal of Medicine* and has been a scientific editor with the *Journal of the American Medical Association* for years. His contributions to strengthening this pillar have been numerous. Perhaps the most important, which has only begun to be felt in the scientific community, has been related to guidelines for reporting. Drummond was one of the authors of the original CONSORT (Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials) statement and has also been involved in developing guidelines for reporting meta-analyses, observational studies, and economic evaluations.

Drummond has tackled one of the most difficult issues in scientific publication: the suppression of data, which leads to publication bias. He has helped to wage Herculean battles with a pharmaceutical company over the publication of suppressed data on

the effectiveness of generic thyroxine and with a tobacco company over the public availability of suppressed data on the physiologic addictiveness of tobacco. Both cases ended in decisive victories.

Drummond has not only been effective in battles with nefarious outside forces, but he has also been willing to address a subject considered almost taboo by scientific editors—editorial fraud—and has identified the most common infraction: editors’ bypassing of the peer-review system entirely or partially, which also leads to publication bias. Fiona Godlee and Kay Dickersin recently asserted that “publication bias is perhaps one of the most important practical and ethical issues currently facing biomedical journals.”<sup>2</sup>

The last pillar Drummond has strengthened is professional organizations. Drummond is active in a number of organizations. I will mention only two: the Cochrane Collaboration and the Council of Science Editors. The Cochrane Collaboration is an international organization with the goal of preparing, maintaining, and disseminating systematic reviews on the effects of health care. It is addressing one of the biggest problems in biomedical science today: the information explosion. Drummond is a cofounder and director of the Cochrane Center in San Francisco and, since its inception, has been active in its efforts to organize and summarize medical knowledge.

This introduction would not be complete if I did not identify the profound contributions that Drummond has made to the Council of Science Editors. In addition to mentioning his sparking the authorship

initiative, I would like to highlight the impact he had on this organization during his tenure as president. He initiated the Scope and Mandate Task Force, whose effects have continued over the administrations of the next five presidents. The effects of the task force are still being felt today. The most obvious change to come out of the task force is our name change from Council of Biology Editors to Council of Science Editors, but its recommendations have also led to fundamental changes in our committee structure, our strategic direction, our goal and our mandate.

Drummond’s numerous efforts to improve the integrity of science continue. His impact on research integrity, on authorship, on peer review, on reporting guidelines, on science editing, and on professional societies have not been fully realized. His work is history in the making. It is stunning to contemplate the impact he has had, continues to have, and undoubtedly will have. I can think of no other person in the world today who has fought so passionately and on so many fronts for the integrity of science. 🔥

## References

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