

Introduction

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Science matters is a new series of reviews on matters of science in respiratory medicine. But do we really need another review series? Study of the lung, normal or diseased, is moving increasingly away from theory towards empirical investigation and is entering territory with which many of us are unfamiliar. Understanding of biological mechanisms which are being revealed by basic science is expanding daily, and it is becoming harder to assimilate the mountain of new information which appears relentlessly on the library shelves. Consequently, review articles have become a necessity, particularly to introduce us to new topics. However, in a world in which we seem to have less time for reading, some reviews are too large to contemplate. Something smaller and more digestible is required. Hence *Science matters*. Another review series, but one with a difference.

Articles in the *Science matters* series will be short focused accounts aimed at introducing important scientific developments to the readers of *Thorax*. Our idea is that a whole topic will be presented on 2–3 pages; it is the principles and potential of new developments that will be highlighted, not the details of methodology.

For most of the articles the primary discussion will concern the scientific basis underlying a new or rapidly advancing field of respiratory medicine. It may be the disease itself – for example, the genetic basis of asthma

or the immunogenetics of lung fibrosis – or it may be concepts for new therapies – for example, whether or not inhibition of phosphodiesterase enzymes will be a panacea in the treatment of lung disease, or how best to deliver genes to the airways in the treatment of cystic fibrosis or other respiratory diseases. However, not all topics will be specifically related to lung disease or its treatment but will address basic scientific issues. For example, one article advises caution as we continue to embrace the molecular biology and reminds us of the continuing merits of careful observation of *in vivo* phenomena. Some topics will be familiar to you but, to ensure a broad coverage of areas and ideas, there will also be some unfamiliar topics which we hope will take you by surprise. We have encouraged authors at different stages of their careers from the worldwide community of respiratory researchers to contribute and to bring new ideas to respiratory science.

Each *Science matters* article is assessed by experts in the field, and for their help we are grateful. In addition, the articles have been checked for their “accessibility” to an informed but non-specialist readership. Again, thanks go to our band of “lay” referees.

Science matters will be with us for the next two years. However, even in such an extensive series as this some topics will have been omitted. Nevertheless, as the series develops there should be something for all our readers. At the very least, we hope to remind you each month that science matters.

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