

Be Your Own Editor

I now believe that much of what I do can be done by the author, either by himself or in collaboration with an interested colleague. If the colleague will ask the author to explain exactly in his own words what he means by each sentence, and even each word, the article will become steadily shorter and clearer as unnecessary words are crossed out and simple words and constructions replace complicated ones.

Articles that have had this time-consuming treatment, sometimes more than once, are much easier for an editor to accept and for a language supervisor to make sound English without changing the meaning.

I try to make it clear that my changes are only suggestions, not Holy Writ, and I make them in pencil so that they can be rubbed out if the author disagrees with them. At the same time I do not hesitate to comment on the length, the layout, or the logic. I am also convinced that articles by English and American authors would *invariably* benefit from scrutiny by colleagues. Not only articles but many expensive medical books are far too long and turgid to read because they get no such treatment from their authors or publishers.

I appreciate that many articles submitted in English have been written in another language and then translated. The "colleague treatment" can be applied to the draft in the original language and, if possible, to the English translation also.