

# Disputes, debates, dialogue, and dodgers

Andrea Rahkola, and Steven Galetta, MD

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**Correspondence**

Ms. Rahkola  
arahkola@neurology.org

At the beginning of 2018, *Neurology* underwent a redesign, including an overhaul of the Disputes & Debates section, formerly known as WriteClick. In addition to the more descriptive section name, rapid online correspondence found a more intuitive location on the website and the Editors' choice issue section became more robust, with an in-depth Editors' commentary for each article discussion. We now seek continued growth of participation from readers and authors.

The Disputes & Debates section not only serves as a way for readers to interact with published content, but as the avenue for continued peer review after publication. In the field of neurology, new information comes quickly—sometimes so quickly that the publication process cannot keep pace. Having the means to continue review on published content allows every article to be a living text and every reader to be a peer reviewer.

If readers are well-versed with a topic, and believe an article would benefit from their insight, they can submit a comment that may not only stimulate further research, but also provide perspective to readers of the article thereafter. Most often, comments focus on the strengths or weakness of the published article, highlighting important points to consider. Sometimes errors in the published text are brought to light by a reader's comment; this is a delicate, but important, situation that should be handled as such, allowing errata to be published and the literature corrected without harsh condemnation. In every case, the readers are adding value to the article, and the journal, with their comments.

Similarly, if authors of a study have new information that was not available at the time of paper submission, but would meaningfully add to the recently published literature, the authors can submit a comment on their own article. Further, authors are always encouraged to respond to comments on their articles in a timely manner, creating a space for conversation between the readers and authors. This can illuminate different perspectives, identify further research with reproduced or conflicting results, or simply provide the opportunity for readers' questions to be answered.

Disputes & Debates: Editors' choice further benefits readers and authors as a location of learning with citation in PubMed. Sometimes a published article can get buried in the literature; this section provides a fresh opportunity for readers to learn about the article and its concepts in the concise language of the Editors' note, Reader response, and Author response. Readers can then seek out the original article for further details or look through the resources provided in the comments' references. Why not participate in something that connects colleagues, increases understanding, challenges current dogma, and provides a possibility of PubMed citation?

While most authors take on the responsibility, responding to readers' comments on their article, authors sometimes choose not to participate<sup>1</sup>; in doing so, they cheat themselves of a great opportunity. Responding to readers' comments allows authors to respond to questions, admit errors, and correct what needs to be corrected for the benefit of colleagues and patients. It is also a platform to back up the validity of their work, ensure its reproducibility, and keep the conversation and interest in their research going. When authors dodge readers' comments, it is likely due to already knowing the limitations, but not wanting to bring further attention to them through admission; however, this often backfires. If a comment is left without response, in the hopes that it will simply go away, usually the opposite happens. Readers will believe the

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From the American Academy of Neurology (A.R.), Minneapolis, MN; and Department of Neurology (S.G.), New York University School of Medicine, New York.  
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unanswered accusation more readily. Only through dialogue can debates be rousing and disputes be resolved. We know that research in neurology is never truly done, and that each article and its correspondence bring it to a new signpost of discovery.

We want the new design of the Disputes & Debates: Rapid online correspondence and Disputes & Debates: Editors' choice sections of *Neurology* to inspire readers and authors so they may keep the literature alive and scrutinized. As we move through the second year of this design, please keep the conversation going: dispute and debate. We look forward to reading your comments.

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## Disclosure

A. Rahkola is the Production Editor of *Neurology*, and is employed by the American Academy of Neurology. S. Galetta is the Section Editor of Disputes & Debates for *Neurology* is on the editorial boards of *Neurology* and the *Journal of Neuroophthalmology*. Go to [Neurology.org/N](http://Neurology.org/N) for full disclosures.

## Reference

1. Pieper KM, Griggs RC. WriteClick nonresponders: waiting, waffling, or weasling? *Neurology* 2015;85:924.

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