

SPECIAL INTERVIEW

PROF. RICHARD ROTHENBERG, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, ANNALS OF EPIDEMIOLOGY

Richard Rothenberg 教授访谈

By Zheng (Jane) Li

Dr. Richard Rothenberg joined the Institute of Public Health, Georgia State University as a Professor in May 2007. He had previously worked at Emory University as Professor of Medicine (1993-2007) and prior to that had spent 25 years at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Over the past several decades, he has conducted research that examines the dynamics of transmission of infectious diseases, primarily HIV, STDs, and the blood borne illnesses (BBIs), with particular emphasis of the effects of social, sexual, and drug-using networks on transmission. He is currently P.I. on an NIH/ NIDA-sponsored project focused on the geographic aspects of social network interactions. Dr. Rothenberg has published over 150 peer-reviewed articles, primarily in the fields of STD, HIV, and epidemiologic methods. In 2002, he received the Parran Award for lifetime contributions to the field of STDs. He is the current Editor-in-Chief of the Annals of Epidemiology. This interview was conducted by Dr. Zheng (Jane) Li with Dr. Rothenberg on November 9, 2012.



Dr. Richard Rothenberg

Richard Rothenberg 教授于 2007 年 5 月起就职于乔治亚州立大学公共卫生学院。他曾经在艾默瑞大学医学院担任教授（1993 至 2007 年）；在此之前，他在美国疾病预防控制中心工作了 25 年。在过去的数十年间，他主持了一系列研究来探讨传染性疾病的传播动力学，特别强调社会关系、性传播和药物使用对传染性疾病传播的影响，包括艾滋病病毒、性传播疾病、血液传播疾病。目前，他是一项由美国国家卫生研究院和美国国家药物滥用研究所资助的研究项目的项目负责人，该项目重点从地理分布层面研究社会关系网络。迄今为止，Rothenberg 博士发表了一百五十余篇学术界同行评论的文章，主要集中在性传播疾病、艾滋病和流行病学方法学领域。2002 年，他因对性传播疾病领域的终生成就获得 Thomas Parran 奖。他目前担任《流行病学年报》的总编辑。李峥博士（Jane）于 2012 年 11 月 9 日与 Rothenberg 教授进行了本次访谈。*

1. Annals of Epidemiology

《流行病学年报》的相关信息

Jane: Can you tell us a bit about the Annals of Epidemiology (Hereafter referred as Annals)? What makes the Annals different from other epidemiology journals?

Jane: 您可以简要介绍一下《流行病学年报》（以下简称《年报》）吗？您认为令《年报》从其它流行病学期刊中脱颖而出是什么原因？

Prof. Rothenberg: The Annals of Epidemiology was established in 1990, and I became the Editor in March 2000, so now it's my 13th year with the 23-year-old journal. It originally was a relatively small journal that published 8 issues a year with a focus on cardiovascular diseases, primarily because of the interests of the founding Editor. Since I became the Editor, we have broadened the scope, and over several years, we have increased publication to 12 issues a year, a format that we've maintained for at least 10 years.

Our journal is not terribly different in scope from some of the other Epi journals in that we are a specialist journal primarily serving professionals in the field of epidemiology. Meanwhile, we are a

* The Chinese translation of the transcript was prepared by Zongshuan (Jack) Duan, MPH Candidate.

“general” epidemiology journal and do not focus on a specific disease or category. We do not publish many on certain fields, such as genomics, because this field is highly technical and there seems to be 3 billion new risk factors. We publish mostly general overview of epidemiological topics and studies, and not so many strictly methodology papers as do American Journal of Epidemiology and the journal Epidemiology.

If we do anything different, that would be we tend to publish papers that are more peripheral in methodology. For example, we tend to receive more submissions that use newer or different methodology than traditional epidemiology which can be of interest.

Rothenberg 教授：《流行病学年报》于 1990 年创刊，我在 2000 年 3 月成为《年报》的编辑，所以我在拥有 23 年历史的《年报》工作了 13 年。起初，它只是一本影响力相对较小的期刊，每年出版 8 期，主要关注心脑血管疾病，因为心脑血管疾病是创刊编辑的兴趣所在。自从我担任编辑以来，我们拓宽了范围，几年之间，我们增刊到一年 12 期，并且如今的出版模式我们已经维持了至少 10 年。

我们的期刊是一家旨在服务于流行病学领域专家的专业期刊，在录用范围方面与其它流行病学期刊并没有显著不同。《年报》是“综合型”流行病学期刊，并不局限在某一疾病或领域。对于某些特定领域的稿件，例如基因组流行病学，我们收到得不多，因为有专门面对该领域研究者的专业期刊。我们发表的大多是流行病学和研究的概述型文章，不像《美国流行病学期刊》和《流行病学》那样发表过多的严格方法性论文。

要说我们的不同点，我想应该是我们往往会发表更多的边缘型流行病学文章。举例来说，我们倾向于接受相比传统流行病学来说使用新的或不同研究方法的文章。

Jane: Earlier you mentioned that the Annals increased its publication frequency and volume within a few years, were you aware of any measures taken to promote the journal and increase its influence in the field?

Jane: 刚才您提到，《年报》在几年之内增加了刊数和的期刊容量。请问您使用了什么方法促进《年报》发行并提高其在行业内的影响力？

Prof. Rothenberg: There is a frequent saying in the U.S. that when new people take over, there's often a “bump” or “boost”, as often seen in political arena. When I took over, there was a backlog that we cleared out which boosted publication. We are the official journal of the American College of Epidemiology. As we continued to expand, there was more commitment and advertisement from the College that helped promoting the journal. The tremendous support from the Board of the College also led to the creation of a new Editorial Board for the journal. So the development of the Annals is fairly gradual and incremental, rather than a big new splash, as do most other journal. The situation is somewhat different nowadays when there are many “entrepreneurs”, or often called “paper mills”, that enter the field of publishing and online publishing. Some of those often focus on the business, rather than sciences, by publishing through paying and making the peer-review process more or less a mere formality. This is unfortunate because such practices ultimate drags down the quality of the whole publication field by creating a large number of publications that do not necessarily stand for high quality. So one of the advantages of being one of the “old time” journals is that we are reputable and reliable, and we are confident of what our journal is delivering.

Rothenberg 教授：在美国有一个很普遍的说法，换届往往意味着“增长点”或“强心针”，这在政坛很常见。当初我接手时，处理掉一些当时的积压，促进了刊物的出版。我们是美国流行病学学会的官方期刊。由于我们持续扩大出版量，学会给予了我们更多的支持和宣传，因此促进了期刊的发行。学会董事会的大力支持，也促使我们成立了一个新的期刊编委会。因此，《年报》的发展是相当循序渐进的，并不是跃进式的发展。然而如今的社会现状是不同的，现在有很多“发行企业”，或者通常被称为“论文工厂”，进入了出版业或者网络出版业。某些出版社的关注点是经营，而不是科学；它们通过收取费用来发表文章，使得

同行评议的过程或多或少流于形式。这是非常不幸的现象，因为这种行径产生出一大批低水平的文章，最终会拖累整个出版行业的质量。因此，作为一家“老牌”期刊，我们的优势之一在于我们是有信誉的、可靠的，我们对我们的发行期刊的质量很有信心。

2. Changes on journal submissions

期刊投稿的变化

Jane: Over the years, have you observed any changes or shifts among the journal submissions?

Jane: 多年以来，您有没有观察到期刊投稿的任何变化？

Prof. Rothenberg: As we grow in size, and hopefully reputation, we have seen an increase in submission, from 150-180 a year when I took over, to over 450 submissions annually now. This is also the case for other epi journals. For example, *Epidemiology* and *American Journal of Epidemiology*, the two top journals in the field, both receive roughly 800 submissions per year. So this reflects a general trend in the field of epidemiology to publish more, and also reflects that many more people are working in the field.

In addition, we are receiving a lot more submissions from outside of the U.S. Probably one fifth to one fourth of submissions are from China and Taiwan, we also receive a great deal of submissions from Japan and Europe. Interestingly, we are also receiving a substantial number of papers from the Mid-east, such as Syria and Egypt. So the *Annals* is truly an international journal. This trend in increased submission from other countries is also true for many journals in U.S. and publishing in American journals seems to be important for people in other countries, so there's a general movement toward American journal, including the *Annals*.

Rothenberg 教授：随着我们规模和声誉的扩大，我们看到了期刊投稿量的增加，从我刚刚接手时一年 150-180 篇，增加到了现在的每年 450 余篇。这也是其他流行病学期刊经历的状况。例如作为业内顶级期刊，《流行病学》和《美国流行病学》每年都会收到大约超过 800 份提交。这反映了流行病学领域出版量的增加，同时也反映了更多的研究者正在从事流行病学研究。

此外，我们收到了比以前更多的来自美国境外的投稿。其中大约有五分之一至四分之一来自中国大陆和台湾；同时我们也收到了很多来自日本和欧洲的投稿。有趣的是，我们还收到了一些来自中东的论文，例如叙利亚和埃及等。因此《年报》是一个真正意义的国际期刊。对于美国的很多期刊来说，境外投稿的增加是一种趋势，好像对其他国家的研究者来说，将论文发表在美国的学术期刊上很重要。因此，这对美国的学术期刊来说是一个普遍的趋势，包括《年报》。

Adam: The *Chinese Health Review* will have a special issue on mental health [Dec 2012]. Would the *Annals* be interested in papers on mental health issues?

Adam: 《中国卫生评论》发布了精神卫生专刊（2012 年 12 月刊）。《年报》是否对精神卫生问题感兴趣？

Prof. Rothenberg: We do not get many papers on mental health issues; usually those papers go to different journals. We certainly welcome contributions on this aspect. Mental health epidemiology is hard to do, because of the difficult diagnosis. Recently we published several papers on autism. The case definition is very difficult, variable and debated, and that affects study outcomes and that's something we are very sensitive to.

Rothenberg 教授：我们没有收到太多关于精神卫生领域的投稿；通常情况下这些论文投到了其它的期刊。当然，我们非常欢迎在精神卫生方面的研究。精神卫生流行病学难度很大，因为难以诊断。最近我们发表了数篇关于自闭症的文章，病例的定义很困难，多变而又充满争议性的定义会影响研究结果，这是我们比较在意的地方。

Jane: Regarding the case definition, do you see the whole field of epidemiology move towards the use of biomarkers to define and characterize cases and outcomes?

Jane: 关于疾病的诊断定义，您如何看待整个流行病学倾向于利用生物标记来定义和描述病例和结果的趋势？

Prof. Rothenberg: Definitely, this shift is especially evident on chronic diseases. In infectious diseases, we've always used organisms or biomarkers for diagnosis using various biological or medical methods. Now in chronic diseases, doing epidemiological studies without the usage of biomarker is getting rare, although we still are getting papers that rely on people's self-report rather than biomarker confirmation.

Rothenberg 教授：确切的说，这种转变对慢性病的诊断效果尤其显著。在传染病研究中，我们一直使用一些生物学或医学方法，利用组织或生物标记物进行诊断。如今在慢性病领域，虽然我们仍然可以收到依靠研究群体自我报告而非生物标记的稿件，象这种没有使用生物标记物的流行病学研究论文已是越来越少。

3. Suggestions to Chinese authors: occupational and environmental health, migrant v.s. native populations, commentaries and reviews

对中国作者的建议：一职业病与环境健康、移民与原地居民对比研究、评论和综述型文章

Jane: Do the increased submissions indicate more and more researches are done in the field of epidemiology globally, such as in China? What are your overall impressions of manuscript submissions from China? What kind of improvements would you want to see?

Jane：投稿量的增加是否意味着越来越多的流行病学研究背景设立在国际范围，比如中国？您对来自中国的投稿总体印象如何？您希望看到什么样的改进？

Prof. Rothenberg: Yes, there is more and more epidemiological work done globally. Let's use China as an example because it's a good one. In general, Chinese contributions over the year have been vastly improving. The epidemiology is much better. The use of English language is much better - we are getting much more comprehensible and well-written manuscripts, whether it's because the overall improvement of English levels among Chinese authors, or the intelligent use of native English speaking coauthor, or both. The quality of the work from China is also high. If I have to rank among contributions from various countries or regions including the U.S., the ones with the highest quality probably come from Scandinavian countries, because they have a long history and tradition not only in their English usage but also in this field.

The main challenge for Chinese investigators is what to do about the vast wealth of data. There is a huge amount of data from the country. It's very rare to see any Chinese studies with less than 300,000 people. But I'm not sure if Chinese investigators' data processing capability is on track with the amount of data. Certainly, they do very sophisticated and very good work. The problem is many work seem to be reproducing what other people have done in the past and in other countries, but in a Chinese population. Certainly this is completely legitimate; but while there is good information from such work, the interest and value are mostly confined to local scale, and are not of global interests. Therefore, some of the manuscripts are rejected, not because they do not present good work or are not of high quality, but because they are simply confirming existing knowledge and do not provide much new information on the particular subjects.

Of course this is not unique just among Chinese contributors, but also in many authors from other parts of the world, including the U.S. We apply the same rules to all submissions. When what we see from a manuscript is what we've already know, except that it's on a different population, that would diminish passion for publication in our journal. Such papers are more fitted for local journal, because they are of interest locally, but not fitted for international journals like ours. So what I'm looking for is something that is new and has better generalization capability.

Rothenberg 教授：是的，现在国际范围的流行病学研究越来越多。中国是一个很好的例子。总体来说，中国在过去几年间的学术成就取得了长足的进步，在流行病学领域取得了很大进展。英语的使用更加规范——我们收到了更多易于理解的投稿，无论是得益于中国作者的整体英语水平的提高，或者是英语国家的合著作者，或者兼而有之。来自中国的投稿的质量也很高。如果我必须将包括美国在内的国家和地区的投稿按质量排名的话，我认为水平最高的应该是北欧日耳曼语系的国家。因为他们无论在英语使用还是流行病学领域上都有相当长的历史了。

中国的研究者面临的最大问题是如何利用巨大丰富的数据资源。中国投稿的数据量很大。研究人口少于 30 万的中国流行病学研究是很少见的。但是，我不确定中国研究者的数据处理能力是否足以驾驭如此庞大的数据量。当然，他们做了非常复杂和出色的分析工作。但问题在于，很多研究看起来只是重复别人以前在其他国家做过的研究，只不过是研究背景换成了中国。当然，这种做法是可行的；但这类工作的信息和价值很大程度上仅仅限于地区范围内，没有全球范围内普及的价值。因此，一些投稿被拒绝，并非因为研究不够出色或质量不高，而是因为他们只是在简单地确认现有的常识，并没有在相关领域提供很多新颖的观点和信息。

当然，这种现象不只局限于中国的研究者，而是普遍存在于世界上很多国家，包括美国。我们对所有投稿采用同样的标准。如果我们发现某篇文章的内容是我们所熟悉的，只不过是换了一个研究人群，这将减少我们期刊出版的热情。这样的文章更适合在当地的期刊投稿，因为他们的研究重点在于当地人群，不适用于像我们这样的国际期刊。因此，我们在寻找新颖的、具有更好泛化能力的观点。

Jane: For a researcher, especially a new or young researcher, in a fairly established field where many problems have been well studied, it seems hard to be original and come up with a brand new concept, method, or problem. What are some of the emerging new problems or areas that are of interest and people can focus on? What types of work would you like to see from Chinese public health researchers?

Jane：对于一名研究者，尤其是刚刚入门或者年轻的科研人员来说，很难在一个发展得相当完备、很多问题都已得到很好研究的领域，保持原创、或者提出一个全新的概念、方法或研究课题。目前有什么新兴的课题值得研究者去关注？您期待中国的公共卫生研究者进行哪方面的研究？

Prof. Rothenberg: It is difficult to be original. There are some original hypotheses, particularly in chronic disease areas, where people can work more creatively, such as metabolic syndromes, diabetes, usage of biomarkers, etc.

There are several areas that I particularly would like to see from China, the first and far most is occupational health - although China might not want to talk about it. It is known that when a country is developing rapidly, especially when developing unevenly, it always comes with growing pains, such as environmental problems and occupational health. There is tremendous wealth in China and also tremendous poverty, which equates to large income disparity. While some parts are growing very fast, some other areas and sectors are being ignored, so it's a very asynchronous time. Work conditions in China, at least as reported in the U.S., are highly variable and often terrible. We used to have Dr. Otto Wong on our Editorial Board who's now retired. He's an expert on environmental and occupational health, and has a lot of contacts in China. He was the major source for occupational health articles in the journal. But we don't get many in this field at all, and we would be very interested in such articles, because they are new, original, different than what we are experiencing in most other developed country, and have a global impact, particularly because of the intertwining global economic. For example, Apple Inc. made a lot of headlines recently for the horrible working conditions and low pay in its manufacturing plant Foxconn in China. Those accusations, if true, can have large impacts on workers' health, such as work-related injuries, diseases, psychological problems.

Because of the large population and severity of occupational and environmental conditions in China, and if China is ready to tackle the occupational and environmental health, there is a large potential to identify problems, define outcomes, formulating hypotheses, carrying out a study with tremendous statistical power, and therefore, find links to diseases and health problems. Such studies are much harder to do in the U.S and many other countries. Therefore, these types of articles will general global interests and impact and we would be very happy to get them.

Rothenberg 教授：提出原创的观点是很困难的。对于某些假设，尤其是在慢性病领域，研究者可以在某些领域从事创造性的工作，例如代谢综合征、糖尿病、生物标志物的使用等等。

另外，我特别期待看到中国的研究者进行几个方面的研究。最重要的是职业卫生——尽管中国也许不想过多的谈论这个话题。众所周知，当一个国家快速发展，尤其是发展不均衡的情况下，总是会伴随着成长的问题，比如环境问题和职业健康问题。中国累积了巨大的财富，同时也滋生了巨大的贫困，导致了悬殊的贫富差距。尽管一些地区发展迅速，但其他地区的发展被忽视，导致发展不平衡。中国的工作环境，起码通过美国的相关报道来看，差异很大并且总体而言很不健康。我们有一位已退休的编辑委员会成员，Otto Wong 博士。他是环境卫生和职业病研究领域的专家，并且同中国有很多联系。他曾经是我们期刊主要的中国职业卫生相关文章的来源。但我们在这一领域的投稿不多，因此我们对这类文章很有兴趣，因为其新颖、原创、与其他发达国家的情况不同、并且拥有全球效应，主要是因为全球经济相互交织。例如，近期很多关于苹果公司的头条新闻披露了其中国加工厂富士康公司糟糕的工作环境和低工资待遇。如果这些报道属实，将会对工人的健康造成很大影响，例如工伤、疾病、心理问题等。

鉴于中国众多的人口、及其严峻的职业和环境条件，如果中国打算应对职业健康和环境问题，相关研究将会有很大潜力来发现问题、确定结果、提出假设、进行一项具有显著统计学意义的研究，并发现疾病和健康问题的关系。这些研究在美国和其它国家很难实施。因此，该类型的文章将具有普遍的全球效应和影响，我们将很高兴能够将其发表。

Jane: Being in the field of environmental health, I have seen more and more collaborations being forged between Chinese investigators and scholars from the U.S. and other countries to study environmental and occupational health. Many of such collaborations are formed with investigators who are from China and educated overseas and who would like to contribute to health research in China.

Jane：在环境卫生领域，我看到越来越多的中国研究者与来自美国或世界各地的研究人员及学者合作，进行环境卫生和职业病研究。很多合作都是由在海外留学、希望致力于中国卫生领域研究的中国学者发起的。

Prof. Rothenberg: That is true, and that leads to another area that are of interest – comparison between a particular population or an ethnic group to a similar population/ethnic group who migrated out of their native area into a new environment. Since World War II, the U.S. has seen an increase of immigrants, especially those highly educated intellectuals. It would be very interesting to study such populations that have similar genetic makeup, but grow up in different countries and different environments, and study how diet, life style, exposure to pollutants changes and many other environmental and social factors impact their health statuses and diseases.

One additional area that I want to see more is commentaries and reviews, not just the meta-analyses. The meta-analysis is formulated, easy to do with a standard method to do it. Sometimes articles are written based on a meta-analysis of only ten or fifteen studies, which will not provide much useful information. On the other hand, it is interesting to see how people think about things, what they mean, and what the implications are. So commentaries and reviews, even if they are descriptive or narrative, are of considerable interest to us.

Before finishing, I want to re-iterate that the Chinese contributions over the years are vastly improving - the materials are well done, the methods are up to date, and the language is

greatly improved, so overall, the quality is fast improving. The important thing is that the work has to be able to go beyond local focus and local interest. This is the same standard applied to contributions from all other parts of the world, including the U.S. We welcome articles from China on all fronts that are of global interest.

Rothenberg 教授：的确如此，而且迁徙问题还产生了另一个有趣的研究课题——将某个特定人群或族群，与另一个相似的从原住地迁徙到该新环境的人群或族群进行比较研究。自从第二次世界大战以来，美国的移民越来越多，尤其是高学历人群。研究这些具有相似基因构成、但从不同国家或环境中成长的人群，研究其饮食习惯、生活方式、污染物暴露和其他环境和社会因素对他们健康和疾病状态的影响，这会是一项很有趣的研究。

还有一个方面，我希望看到更多的评论和综述，而不仅仅是荟萃分析。荟萃分析有固定模板和标准模式，相对简单。有时，这些综述仅仅介绍数项研究的结果，不能提供有用的信息。另一方面，观察其他人如何看待一件事、他们的思维模式、获得什么样的启发是很有趣的。所以，我们对评论的兴趣比较大，即便只是描述性或叙述性质的。

结束之前，我想再次重申，中国在几年间的投稿质量进步显著——材料切题、分析方法也是最新的，语言有很大提高。重要的是，工作范围必须要超越地区范畴。同样的标准也适用于世界各地，包括美国。但我们最基本的态度是很明确的：我们欢迎来自中国的研究成果。