A matter of form

For want of a good platform to do it, I have chosen to air my pet grievance to the unsuspecting readership of *Current Science*; the reason for this choice is that my complaint/plea is to the science managers of our country.

I guess you have to live with the fact that if you want anything from a government office, you have to fill in a prescribed form (possibly several, and with multiplicity too) whose architect may not be very generous in allotting space for the answers to different questions. What irks me is the number of forms academics have to fill 'in the prescribed proforma' – for instance, when someone is being proposed for some national award/prize, be it a CBSE scholarship, a nomination to the fellowship of some erudite academy of sciences, a proposal for the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize, . . . , the list is endless.

What is particularly irritating is that this proforma fetish automatically rules out the practical ways – electronic, invariably – of collecting the necessary data and feeding into a form. When almost 90% of most of the world's communication involves the use of some manner of the word-processor, our loyalty to 'the proforma' demands a return from the jet to a bullock cart.

What is galling is that the people for whom these forms are intended are very often supposedly the *créme de la crème* of our scientific intelligentsia, who should be able to digest information compiled in any reasonably organized fashion. Why is it unthinkable that a proposal for a fellow to the INSA, for instance, can be made on a word-processed file and communicated by e-mail with necessary attachments? Sending the whole thing in a CD, as also n copies of each of the best k publications of the candidate, seems such a waste of time, energy and paper? Cannot the sectional committees, for whom these copies are intended, just get the data from the internet if appropriate links are provided?

My ranting will find sympathetic ears with those of us who were recently at the receiving end of demands by several UGC committees seeking volumes of data (submitted on prescribed proforma, naturally) to conclude whether decisions taken recklessly by the UGC several years ago to grant 'deemed-to-be University status' were justifiable.

V. S. SUNDER

The Institute of Mathematical Sciences,
CIT Campus, Taramani,
Chennai 600 113, India
e-mail: sunder@imsc.res.in

Dietary management

The article published in *Current Science*[1] contains several unsubstantiated statements.

The multigrain combination of 30–70 ratio, ragi to wheat has to be based on reliable studies. There may be any number of combinations and permutations. The ideal ratio has to be worked out. The statement 'Finger millet contains more fibre, minerals and vitamins. . .' is factually incorrect. It is a comparative statement and therefore the cereal with which it is compared should be mentioned. There are some grains which contain more vitamins and minerals (selective). All the subjects need to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetics and the status of control of their blood glucose has to be determined. Further, all the reported blood glucose values should be based on fasting levels. Blood glucose fluctuates after each meal and the carryover effects are seen for sometime. If the subjects have switched their diet from less fibre in the meals to more fibre there will be changes in blood glucose. This is also seen if the subjects take less carbohydrates (calories) in their diet compared to their initial intake before the trial. Blood glucose cannot be used as a parameter in such studies. Glycosylated haemoglobin which does not fluctuate rapidly after every meal is a better indicator, but it should be undertaken in studies 3–4 months after altering the diet. The sample size is too small to arrive at any meaningful conclusion. The authors further state that 'the higher level of fibre present in finger millet made the chapati tasty. . .', which is not correct. In fact, fibre does not contribute to taste.

1. Pradhan, A., Nag, S. K. and Patil, S. K., *Curr. Sci.*, 2010, **98**, 763–765.

M. P. RAJENDRA PRASAD

National Institute of Nutrition,
Hyderabad 500 007, India
e-mail: rajmp2000@yahoo.com