I came here not only as the president of the World Association of Medical Editors, but also as an IPPNW member. It is great to meet here my old friends with whom I cooperated during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, when they were my comrades in peace efforts. My organization, WAME, is in its principles of globality similar to the aims of the IPPNW Conference today. Our aim is to reach out to all medical editors around the world and by helping them help their medical community do research in areas specific for their region. Research from small and developing countries is not visible in the international community. Major scientific journals represent about 10% of the existing journals in the world, but they present 95% of the relevant information. However, most of the information that is relevant to discussion at this session is there in the areas that are not visible in the international community of medical journals. One of the main goals of our Association is to reach out to the journals in such areas and improve the editorial standards all over the world. Fact Sheets of the National Library of Medicine in the United States, which is the largest repository of medical journals, say that the Library received more than 23,000 periodical titles in 2000. Only 4,000 of them are indexed in MEDLINE. This means that the information coming from the so-called scientific periphery, is not available. It’s missing, and it’s exactly from the parts of the world that have the major problems, such as small arms violence, war, and other issues related to the public health problems and general health problems. Our aim is to really help and reach all editors around the world so that the knowledge about these issues – and you all said that there is not enough research and not enough data on these topics – to make it visible and available to the world. I myself am an editor of such a small journal, the Croatian Medical Journal, which documents issues related to the post-war violence, related to small arms, which is also a problem in Croatia. I would like to call upon the editors of other journals at this conference to act as educators in their own communities, because our experience is that there is very valuable information in such less privileged communities. This information has to be brought to the attention of the international community, and it is really up to the editors of local journals not to be “gatekeepers” as they are usually called in science – they are “gatekeepers” and let in only the most valuable research that is at the frontier of medical science – journal editors in small journals are more “shepherds” who really help their authors to present their data. That was our experience in the Croatian Medical Journal when we started in 1992 as a new journal published in English and aimed at international audiences. We wanted to document the medical impact of war in Croatia but we saw that our colleagues had important data but didn’t know how to present them. We worked
very hard with them and succeeded in helping them publish more than 300 papers in our own journal. We also helped our authors to publish their work in other international journals, and they published with our help more than 200 articles in international journals. And then we decided to turn to our future authors – medical students. Making, in a way, a preventive action, we convinced the board of our medical school in Zagreb, and later on in other medical schools in Croatia, to have a mandatory course for medical students. The course runs in the second year of the 6 year medical curriculum, and we teach them about how to find information in medicine, what is research, how you go about making a clinical or epidemiological research, and how you evaluate and publish your research paper. I think that’s very important, because most of the big journals would not take such effort to publish work from the scientific periphery. But if you educate researchers and if you help them present their data, they can make an impact on the international medical community and improve the research in their own region. All three journals present here at the Conference work hard to these topics to the view of the international medical community and work together on this. So perhaps thematic issue on these topics would be something that we should strive to and engage other journals in such action.