The inductive logic of the narrative, on the other hand, may be
in the example is provided by the myth about serotonin and depression,
However, scientific narratives can also be misused. One such
narrative that frames the results and imbues them with meaning.
validity (4). Science therefore needs interpretation in the form of a
duce temporary and context-dependent results with limited external
fact, it is rare that science produces universal truths. More often, it pro-
dicate attractiveness and simplicity that we like them to have (3). In
«pleasing principle» when research findings have none of the imme-
are argued that the narrative power of academic articles can be seen as a
additional importance by the use of narrative elements (2).

Nevertheless, narratives establish meaning and coherence in a com-
plicated world. This is why we are attracted to good narratives, scientific
narratives included. A new research finding must be not only the
result of solid scientific methodology and amenable to verification
in order to be accepted, it must also provide meaning and coherence.
Therefore, a good academic article must also present a narrative that
places this finding in a wider context and persuades the reader to
accept that sure, this might have some sense to it. In other words:
The deductive power of objective findings can be conferred with
additional importance by the use of narrative elements (2).

Roald Hoffmann, Nobel Prize laureate in chemistry, has similarly
argued that the narrative power of academic articles can be seen as a
«pleasing principles» when research findings have none of the imme-
rate that science produces universal truths. More often, it pro-
duces temporary and context-dependent results with limited external
validity (4). Science therefore needs interpretation in the form of a
narrative that frames the results and imbues them with meaning.

However, scientific narratives can also be misused. One such
example is provided by the myth about serotonin and depression,
as described by David Healey in an (elegantly narrated) editorial
in the BMJ (5). This is the story of how the exceptionally poorly
founded narrative of how depression is «caused» by insufficient
levels of serotonin gradually gained ground, first among the patient’s
organisations, then in the general public, and how it later was used
to bolster the myth that selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors bring
the serotonin levels back to «normal». A simplistic, inductive expla-
nation completely devoid of any evidence or reasonable degree of
plausibility was turned into a strongly appealing narrative. To clini-
cians it became a brief and effective way to explain a complex pro-
blem («Your serotonin level is too low. Here is a pill that will raise
it.»). For patients, it helped raise their symptoms and treatment to
a higher level of medical status (6). This myth is still being retold,
in scientific articles as well as in the popular press (7). To Healey,
this is an example of how a myth with an appearance of plausibility
may cause us to disregard solid evidence from clinical trials (5). The
phenomenon is well known – attempts to disprove inductive «truths»
with the aid of deductive truths rarely succeed (8). Anybody who has
ever been in a debate with the alternative medicine movement and its
blind faith in anecdotal evidence can testify to this. A good narrative
trumps reality.

In its internal discourse, the academic tradition long maintained
control of its own narratives. In practice, academic articles were
unavailable to others than the researchers and clinicians who were
to use the results, and (the sparse) dissemination to the public took
place under full control of the researchers themselves. Fortunately,
this is no longer so. In Norway, there are now approximately five
million computers, more than 96 % of the population are Internet
users, and there are significantly more mobile phone subscriptions
than there are inhabitants (9). In this new reality, it is illusory to
believe that researchers will be able to maintain control over the
narratives about their own research. This is a desirable and neces-
ary trend in a modern society. However, when narratives are retold
to provide meaning outside the space in which they were created,
they may produce completely different effects. Then, the narrative
about a randomised intervention study may suddenly become the
story of a «life-and-death heart lottery» (10), and the narrative
about a questionnaire survey with a control group may be retold
as a story in which there is no control group (11). In academic jour-
nals, narratives ought to have some shades of grey to be credible.
In the world of mass media they must be black or white.

We doctors shift surprisingly frequently between the levels
of narrative and science, including when we read scientific material.
As scientific authors we devise our texts in precisely this border-
land. When an internationally outstanding editor and a Nobel Prize
laureate in chemistry can admit to this, we should also dare to do
the same. That is an inductive conclusion.

References
1. Losee OK. Forskning er ikke sanntek, men fortellinger. Tidsskr Nor Legeforen
2. Dahlstrom MF. Using narratives and storytelling to communicate science with
bmj.j355/rapid-responses [16.2.2016]
5. Healy D. Serotonin and depression. The marketing of a myth. BMJ 2015; 350:
h1771.
8. Kreilov M. Trusting the tale: the narrativist turn in the human sciences. New
9. Globalis. FN-sambandet Landside Norge. www.globalis.no/Land/Norge/IshowI/
indicators [16.2.2016]
hjertelotteri-pa-liv-og-dod-1.4457477 [16.2.2016].