



Stanley J.
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State of the Journal

As this issue marks the completion of my five-year term as editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine* (JNM), I thought it appropriate to report to the readership on the State of the Journal.

As the official publication of the Society of Nuclear Medicine (SNM), the Journal enjoys a monthly worldwide circulation of approximately 15,000 copies—an impressive number for a medical subspecialty. This number is buoyed by the fact that JNM serves the entire nuclear medicine community, the basic scientists and the technologists in addition to the physician specialists. In fact, the distribution is even greater since in many countries outside of the United States, the copy of the monthly issue received by the representative SNM member is shared by other members of the Nuclear Medicine Department who are unable to afford individual memberships.

These five years have been marked by a number of challenges and achievements. Shortly after I became editor-in-chief, JNM experienced a sharp increase in paper and production costs. Since this occurred simultaneously with a decrease in Society revenues, incremental funds were not available. Faced with the prospect of accepting and publishing fewer manuscripts, I elected to sacrifice aesthetics and print articles closer to the margins of the page so as to realize a 10%–15% increase in available space at the same cost per page. This modification received mixed reviews but looking back on it now, I think it was a creative response to a difficult situation that assured members that their work would be published based on similar assessments of merit as in the past. Furthermore, it provided the readership with more of the new developments in nuclear medicine than if I had elected to simply accept and publish fewer manuscripts.

The validity of this maneuver is supported by an objective assessment of the quality of published manuscripts, measured in part by the so-called “impact factor,” a figure developed to assess the influence scientific journals have on the workers in a particular field. A survey of medical and scientific journals is published annually that assesses the frequency of citation of a particular journal in subsequent publications. This value, the impact factor, is divided by the total number of articles published by that journal each year. The impact factor is thus a measure of a journal’s impact on others working in the field. In recent years, JNM has had an impact factor of approximately 4.0, which ranked it number one in the group of journals dealing with

medical imaging and radiation medicine-related topics. This year, it was overtaken slightly by *Radiology* for first overall, although it maintained the impact factor at the same level. I don’t find a great deal of significance in this slight change as I believe the growth in *Radiology* relates to advances in MRI, MRA and fMRI as well as the breadth of scope of that journal. Articles published in JNM continue to have a major impact on the work of others in the fields of imaging and medical uses of radioactive material.

There are other observations about JNM that should be of interest to readers. The number of manuscripts received and published that originate from outside of North America has grown significantly, accounting for approximately half of the published material. This is a testament to the growth of nuclear medicine throughout Europe, Asia and elsewhere. It affirms also the value of nuclear medicine studies in diagnosis, patient management and treatment so that as soon as an economy can support the infrastructure of nuclear medicine, the basic and clinical science of nuclear medicine flourishes. At the same time, this shift in investigational activity may reflect the stunning effect that economic control of medical practice within the United States has had on nuclear medicine physicians and scientists. It is not that the resources are insufficient to continue the level of intellectual activity previously present. Rather, I suspect, that the clinical and basic scientists have not yet fully adjusted to the new service demands on their time. Certainly, the number of innovations continue despite, perhaps because of, the efforts by government and medical care delivery organizations to reduce overall costs.

I have not been pleased with the increasing delay in evaluating manuscripts for publication, and after acceptance, getting them published. This has been a consequence usually of long delays in obtaining reviewer responses. While authors are always frustrated by the reviewers’ delay, in many cases the authors themselves compound the delay by not revising the manuscripts within the prescribed interval. This leads to a round of correspondence to extend the revision period. I have passed these experiences and insights on to the new editor, Martin P. Sandler, MD, who brings new vigor to these tasks. I am hopeful that his efforts will be supported by the editorial board and the reviewers. He will be aided by Susan Alexander, my wonderful editorial office manager who has been a miracle and a blessing for me, the Journal and all SNM—members. Her skills have been recognized and supported

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**JNM’s
impact
factor of “4”
made it
number one
in medical
imaging and
radiation-
related peri-
odicals.**

History Corner

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the antiproton. He also played a role in the discovery of slow neutrons, astatine, plutonium, and nuclear isomerism. Element 43 may be the only element to have been discovered in a pile of junk—in this case, the discarded molybdenum heat shields.

Segrè never expected that element 43 would find any useful application; after all, it had no stable isotopes. He said of it, “It

was a curiosity; it filled a blank space.” Segrè the physicist was delighted to have discovered a missing element, but Segrè the man was quite moved as he saw his “curiosity” become one of the most widely used and beneficial substances in medicine.

—Dennis D. Patton, MD, SNM historian, is professor of radiology and optical sciences at University Medical Center, Tucson, Arizona

State of the Journal

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by John Childs, PhD, director of communication services for the SNM in Reston. He has reorganized the editorial support for the JNM by bringing Susan Alexander to Reston to support the new editor and his staff. This constellation of intelligence, energy and talent promises to provide the membership with excellent support in the months ahead.

I thank the Society for the privilege of having served as edi-

tor of its journal. In a conversation about nuclear medicine and the JNM, one of my friends defined “a good editor as the Editor of a good journal.” I believe that JNM is a good journal and will continue to reflect the best that the specialty has to offer.

Stanley J. Goldsmith, MD

Editor-in-Chief (1994–1998)

The Journal of Nuclear Medicine

Exacting Standards

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as the leading peer-reviewed journal of its kind.

As importantly, Goldsmith maintained a level of total printed pages and articles published per year at a time when the SNM, as did other medical societies, had to do financial belt-tightening on a number of programs, including publication efforts, in response to the onslaught of managed care and increased manufacturing and production costs in the printing industry.

However, he is first to share the journal’s successes with his associate editors, editorial board members, reviewers, and with SNM publication department staff. “Some critics say I expect too much, but actually I’m delighted when I’m not disappointed,” Goldsmith observed. “And I’m thrilled to work with people who have similar standards. It makes the experience more delightful. I had really good people to work with at SNM, and I thank them all for their efforts.”

As for the journal’s role in reporting on developments in the specialty, Goldsmith feels that it will continue to grow and remain a strong presence. “The field has become more sophisticated,” said Goldsmith, “however, the day-to-day practice of nuclear medicine has not caught up to the science. The science is the beacon, and we’re moving ahead to the demands of the new equipment.”

One such example is image fusion, the superimposing of a radionuclide image with a CT image, continued Goldsmith. “When I started as editor, it was a novelty only occasionally appearing in articles, but now it is about to become routine.”

Scattered Thoughts

According to Goldsmith, he had no specific journalistic role models in mind when deciding whether to write a monthly col-

umn, although he did like the editorials in *Science*, especially the lighthearted ones. “At first, I was not going to do the column. I thought Bill [Strauss] had done such a good job with ‘Randoms’ and I did not think I would have the time.” But writing “Scatter,” his monthly editorial column, turned out to be more enjoyable than he had anticipated. After assessing the columns over the years, he found that some were purely whimsical pieces, others were “agitprop” or sermons, and some treated serious problems facing the specialty in a creative way. “I received numerous communications about Scatter—some were angry, but many of them were complimentary,” said Goldsmith.

And just what was the genesis for the “little man in the forest,” who always appeared in the December column? “Well,” Goldsmith recalled, “I came to realize one day what Dante meant about the symbolism of being lost in the forest and how it tied in with the complexities of balancing our personal, professional, and editorial requirements. Anyway, I found it an interesting literary device to illustrate the pleasantries and highpoints of being editor.”

New Directions

Although he will remain on the journal’s editorial board at the end of his editorship, Goldsmith has not quite decided what direction future journalistic endeavors may take. Currently, he is co-editing a textbook, “Nuclear Oncology,” with Iraj Khakali, MD, and Jean Maublant, MD. He may also take a stab at writing essays—those with a creative and nonscientific bent. And how does this outgoing editor-in-chief summarize this sometimes frustrating but always rewarding position? “Being editor of JNM is the most worthwhile job one can have in the SNM.”

—Eleanore Tapscott