

Advertising and the Scholarly Journal

In recent years, the Editorial Board of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine* has questioned the propriety of including advertisements in the Journal. As a result of my discussions with members of the Board and others, I have concluded that individuals concerned about promotional copy in the Journal have three main complaints. First, advertisements are viewed as an annoyance to the reader who approaches the Journal from the purely academic standpoint. Second, there is the concern that the reputation of the Journal will become tarnished through this commercial association, and that authors may not submit their most important work to the Journal; they might go elsewhere, presumably to journals that carry little or no advertising. Third, criticisms that advertisements are biased and do not provide complete and balanced information are fortunately rarely heard, but they always lurk, because advertising copy is not peer reviewed as are scientific articles, and there is the potential for the reader to be misled (1).

This debate seems to be on the minds of others, evidenced by the fact that *Index Medicus*, which now has a subject category for "advertising," lists a sizable number of recent contributions, mostly editorials. Some deal with advertising by health care deliverers of all sorts, but a number address the issue under discussion—the tainting of pure science with too close an association with industry (2-6). In one case, the physician editors of a journal resigned in protest when the medical association sponsoring the journal appointed a layman as managing editor, who was given ultimate authority for the content in an effort to increase advertising income (2,3). In the case of *The Journal of Nuclear Medicine*, concern has been voiced about improving the liaison with industry to allow for a healthier exchange of ideas. As a result, a special Advertising Committee was formed, comprised of Society of Nuclear Medicine members and its advertisers. For the past year and a half, the Committee has been examining all issues related to advertising and has offered many helpful suggestions. One suggestion, that the Journal include more general interest material, has been approached by the inclusion of *Newsline* in its advertising pages.

If we are to conclude that advertising is appropriate to a prestigious scientific journal—and such must be the case, for almost all journals do carry at least a modicum of advertising—what are the reasons for accepting advertisements and how can they complement the main mission of the scholarly journal? The motivation of industry to advertise in the Journal, as stated in meetings of the Advertising Committee of the Society, is to keep the readership aware of the advertiser's presence in the marketplace, so the company can retain or increase its share of market. To do this, products may be described in much the same way sales representatives would describe them. At other times, the company may purchase advertising space to convey a message of a more general nature.

One key motivation of an editor to include advertisements is that advertising copy may supplement the scientific content of published articles and even present new and helpful product information. Many scientific investigations reported in the Journal depend on commercially available radiopharmaceuticals and equipment for their data. These sources are mentioned in the "Materials and Methods" section of published articles with references to suppliers but often without details, as space does not permit. If the supplier also advertises in the Journal, the advertisement may provide more details, or at least direct the reader to a source of more information.

The Journal of Nuclear Medicine needs the strong support of its readers, its authors, and its advertisers to maintain our position of leadership in the years ahead. Advertisements are a useful and welcome part of the Journal, as long as they augment its scholarly mission. Insofar as possible, it is my wish that advertising standards be established and maintained jointly by industry and the Society, as are exhibits at our Annual Meeting. The Advertising Committee

of the Society is an ideal forum for the discussion of this issue, and I intend to seek its counsel in developing a set of principles to govern advertising in the Journal, as other journals have done (7). These principles will then be published in the Journal for critical review and comment. In the meantime, I invite and welcome criticisms and suggestions about advertising, or any other matter concerning the Journal.

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