



PURPOSES IN MEDICAL RESEARCH
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE JOURNAL OF CLINICAL INVESTIGATION
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Custom has varied in the history of medical journalism; certain journals were introduced to their readers without explicit statements by their editors of the purposes which the new publications were to serve. In these instances it was left to chance or to the general knowledge of the contemporary public to find within its pages a justification for the new venture. Other journals have been explicit in the avowal of their objects. Both methods have advantages; both have disadvantages. In a discipline as old as medicine, which has continuously engaged the profound interest of men for as many centuries as has any of the other subjects in which men have exercised curiosity and the desire for knowledge, it is fitting in the interests of definiteness and with the view of making an exact statement of our conceptions, as well as in attempting to anticipate the natural inquiry of our contemporaries, to define the motives which suggest this new publication.

There is a pitfall here, which should be avoided. In the attempt to explain the purposes which actuate the publication of a new journal, the impulse may be, as Naunyn¹ pointed out in the case of Wunderlich, to make too precise the limits within which the thought which underlies the undertaking is to be confined. The doors in medicine must naturally be kept open so that influences, no matter whence derived, may contribute their share to the understanding and elucidation of the problems which constitute the proper province of medicine. But that a danger lies here history has made amply apparent. For there has never been a time either in the ancient or in the modern world when medicine was far removed from the influences of neighbor-

¹ Naunyn, B., *Deut. Arch. f. Klin. Med.*, 1922, cxi, 1-27. *Die deutsche Heilkunde vom Anfang des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts.*

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Seventy-five years ago, in the first pages of the first volume of the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, Alfred E. Cohn proposed that this new journal “give expression” to “the spirit which has called the American Society for Clinical Investigation into being” (1). Cohn defined that new spirit as flowing from the growing self-consciousness of academic medicine, which recognized that its bailiwick was the “legitimate interest in learning as well as a means for furthering the methods which lead to the cure of disease.” Three-quarters of a century later, that is still the *raison d’être* of the *JCI*. This has not and will not change.

But some things do change for this journal; you are either holding an example or looking at one on your computer screen. As Cohn pointed out in the *JCI*’s first editorial, academic medicine is never unaffected by the world around it. And, as we have learned, neither is academic medical publishing. Beginning with this issue, we are taking into account the realities of new technology and trends, and are now publishing the Journal directly from our editorial office. We are very grateful to Rockefeller University Press for its years of service to the Society. Nevertheless, it became clear to both parties that the *JCI* should be published directly by its Society, which will realize both financial and scientific benefits. Financially, the Journal will be more economical to produce, and thus subscriptions, page charges, etc. will be held to a minimum. Scientifically, we will be able to even further

reduce turnaround time from acceptance to publication, as we will have more direct control over deadlines and issue contents. Faster turnaround can only help the ongoing dialogue that defines the research enterprise.

There are other changes as well. As readers may already know (2), we are now accepting letters to the editor on the website. We also plan to continue our “fast track” approach to the reviewing and publishing of Rapid publications. In most cases, decisions regarding Rapids are now being completed within two weeks of receipt. We are also turning our attention toward providing a wider range of Editorials, Commentaries, and Perspectives in the “front” of the book, in order to give the greatest number of readers access to the first-rate science published in the “back.” We are eager to hear your ideas on specific topics, and hope to cover a wide spectrum of interests.

As I outlined in my very first editorial (3), all of the members of the Editorial Board are keenly aware of the fact that this is not “our” journal, but rather your journal. If the changes we are implementing enhance the *JCI*’s utility for you, that is precisely our goal. If there are problems, we want to know. It will undoubtedly take some time for the dust to settle following all this construction, but we think it is worth the effort. And, despite all these changes, it is not a new foundation we are building. As always, the Board meets weekly to review all submitted manuscripts. We continue to place considerable emphasis on our efforts to select those works for publica-

tion that not only pass muster with our external referees, but also those that will appeal to our broad readership. Prioritization is an inexact science, but we feel that the large expanse of research interests covered by our editors ensures proper balance for all disciplines. By keeping our eyes focused on our most important goal — the rapid dissemination of the best science possible — we strive to renew the spirit in which the *JCI* was founded and by which it has been guided for the past 75 years.

Stephen J. Weiss

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For the Editorial Board

1. Cohn, A.E. 1924. Purposes in medical research: an introduction to the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*. *J. Clin. Invest.* 1:1-11.
2. Weiss, S.J. 1998. Rapids, consultants, letters, self-publishing and more... “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” *J. Clin. Invest.* 102:273.
3. Weiss, S.J. 1997. Speed, competition, rigor and creativity: striking a delicate balance. *J. Clin. Invest.* 99:817-818.