

Change in Editorial Command

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In March of this year, Dr. Ajit Varki of the University of California, San Diego, and his colleagues will assume editorial responsibility for *The Journal of Clinical Investigation* (JCI). The Journal is presently in a strong position, both scientifically and fiscally, but faces new challenges if it is to continue to thrive.

The current editors, at the time of our first meeting in March of 1987, discussed key objectives which we hoped to achieve during our tenure. Our most important overall goal was to retain the high standards for rigorous peer review set by previous editors, while enhancing the attractiveness of the Journal to both authors and readers as a vehicle for publication of high quality, forward-looking articles in fast-moving areas of investigation. To help achieve this objective, substantive changes were made in the operation and style of the Journal (1). Specific changes have included: (a) redesign of the Journal to include a cover figure, which highlights an article in that same issue, and a categorized table of contents which clusters articles having similar biologic themes, thus building upon the strength of the JCI as a general journal focusing on human biology and disease; (b) recruitment of Consulting Editors from institutions throughout the U.S. with scientific backgrounds complementary to those of the Associate Editors, thus bringing additional expertise and broadened representation to the review process; (c) an increase in the proportion of published articles reporting molecular mechanisms of disease, accomplished in part by targeted solicitation of manuscripts; (d) an increase in the number of Perspectives or minireview articles; (e) improved and computerized tracking of manuscripts and elimination of habitually tardy reviewers, leading to progressive improvement in the response time for first decisions on manuscripts submitted for regular or rapid publication (now approximately four weeks); and (f) increased editorial input whereby difficult decisions regarding acceptability are made early, such that only 7–8% of submissions currently undergo more than two review cycles and protracted reviews which serve neither author nor reader well are minimized.

These changes, as judged by the number and quality of submissions, as well as more subjective feedback, have had a positive impact. After several "level" years, the number of submissions in 1990 increased by almost 10% and, as of this writing, the number of 1991 submissions is substantially ahead of the 1990 pace. More importantly, the submissions which we receive and which the editors discuss each week have continued to improve in quality and include leading edge investigation in a variety of areas.

At the same time, the JCI has been financially successful. It has exhibited an operating surplus in each of the last several years, and the size of the reserve fund has more than doubled since the beginning of 1987. This strengthened financial position has permitted The American Society for Clinical Investigation (ASCI) to implement new initiatives consistent with its objectives, such as the scholarship program for high school teachers begun this past summer and contributions to stipends

for young investigators attending the annual Spring meeting (2).

Despite this progress, the JCI faces new and continuing challenges. For example, in his initial editorial in 1924, Dr. Alfred E. Cohn indicated that the JCI was intended to foster and communicate strong research on human biology and disease conducted in university based clinical departments (3). This objective has largely been achieved, but the original view of the scientific community which the JCI serves is now much too narrow. The bylaws of the ASCI have recently been modified to encourage inclusion of non-Society members on the Editorial Committee, and the JCI must continue to broaden its ranks of submitting biomedical scientists and readers to include more Ph.D.'s outside of clinical departments doing work relevant to human biology and disease. The recent success of the Journal, by itself, also brings new issues to the fore. For example, the increasing number of high quality submissions makes it appropriate to consider new approaches to the screening and review of manuscripts so as to continue to reduce the time that authors must wait, as well as the burden our reviewers are asked to bear, without compromising either rigor or fairness. The increased number of submissions to, and ultimately publications appearing in the JCI also places new financial pressures on the Journal, which has historically operated on a very thin margin. Fortunately, Dr. Varki and his colleagues have anticipated these issues and are planning changes which should position the JCI well as it approaches the twenty-first century (4).

Finally, there are many individuals who have contributed directly or indirectly to the recent success of the JCI and to whom I am personally indebted. The Associate Editors from both the University of California, San Francisco, and Stanford University, including Drs. William T. Clusin (1988–92), Martin Cogan (1988–92), Ira M. Goldstein (1987–92), Ferid Murad (1987–88), Basil Rapoport (1987–90), Gary K. Schoolnik (1987–92), Marc A. Shuman (1987–92), Gordon J. Strewler (1991–92), David Warnock (1987–88), and Lewis T. Williams (1987) have all invested an enormous amount of effort in the JCI, despite heavy competing demands for their time and talent, and have made our weekly editors' meetings something we all look forward to. The Consulting Editors, including Drs. Jan L. Breslow, Dennis A. Carson, Jeffrey S. Flier, John D. Minna, Benjamin D. Schwartz, and Michael J. Welsh, have brought a new dimension to the review process and have played a major role in the broadened perspective of the Journal. Mr. Michael Held (Production Editor) and Janice Woo (Managing Editor) have skillfully overseen editorial office operations from the start, and the dedication of our editorial office staff, including David Greene, Roger Kieval, and Mark Sargent, has made it possible to implement all the constructive changes in the review process outlined above. Mr. Held, who has been responsible for computerizing the office operations, will be moving with the Journal to San Diego. This will help ensure a smooth transition and continued success. Finally, I would like to thank the recent councilors and presidents of the ASCI (Drs. Robert J. Lefkowitz, C. Ronald Kahn, Stuart H. Orkin, William J. Koopman, and Edward C. Benz, Jr.) for their strong support and advice, my wife, Dr. Peggy Crawford, and

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Editor

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