

Evolution, not revolution

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Editorial

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With this issue, the *JCI* editorial board moves from Columbia University to the University of Pennsylvania. It has become a tradition for the incoming editor in chief to pontificate on the state of biomedical science, the role that the *JCI* plays, and perhaps provide a vision for the future of the journal, and I am taking this opportunity to adhere to that tradition.

As background reading, I reviewed a number of my predecessors' first editorials. In 2002 Andrew Marks wrote, "the overriding mission of the new *JCI* editors is to continue publishing important and timely biomedical research of broad interest and relevance to normal biology and diseases" (1). This, of course, is what the *JCI* has represented since its inception. Indeed, in October 1924, inaugural *JCI* Editor in Chief Alfred E. Cohn wrote, "we believe it necessary as the basis of therapeutics to understand the mechanisms, that is to say, the processes which underlie the manifestations of disease, for it is these which it is one of our functions to attempt to correct" (2). It is difficult to improve upon that sentiment.

So, how to achieve these goals? *Primum non nocere* – first, do no harm. "The journal is doing well . . . Go for evolution – not revolution." Thus wrote one of the respondents to an online survey we presented to the ASCI members and *JCI* readership soliciting suggestions for the next five years of the *JCI*. We at Penn wholeheartedly agree. We are indebted to previous editorial boards for their outstanding management and handling of the *JCI* and will not institute change just for the sake of change. Nonetheless, we do see new opportunities to build on a strong foundation and we have planned a number of improvements. Readers and authors can expect to see the following:

Expanded emphasis on clinical investigation and translational medicine. We are particularly interested in advances in biomedical research aimed at a mechanistic understanding of disease that may inform the development of novel and rational approaches to treatment. While a majority of the work we publish is likely to continue

to use animal models of human diseases, we want to underscore the importance of translational (i.e., human) studies, including both interventional trials and epidemiologic studies. In order for such manuscripts to be published in the *JCI*, the data must not be merely observational, but must contain substantial insight into disease mechanisms and/or treatment. We know many of you are performing such studies, and the best of these will have a home in the *JCI*.

An effort to widen the scientific scope of the journal. Our survey respondents felt that a number of areas were underrepresented in the *JCI*. These include global health, AIDS, stem cells, drug discovery, and clinical research. We will work to recruit the best science in these areas. To assist us in these and other fields, we have assembled an editorial board with broad-based expertise to specifically address areas such as parasitology, pharmacology, dermatology, ophthalmology, genetics of complex disorders, and epidemiology.

Changes in article formats. We are now inviting submission of *Technical Advances*. Our goal is to publish manuscripts that report new and important research tools and techniques that could have broad impact. Such papers optimally will also include application of the technique to a specific scientific question relevant to understanding or treating a disease.

In addition, the rapid publication format will be discontinued. The Columbia editorial board achieved an outstanding turnaround time for manuscript review (an average of 28 days) and publication (6–8 weeks). As a result, and with the inception of online-first publication, rapidity is standard at the *JCI*. The rapid publication format also earmarked shorter presentations of more narrowly focused but still scientifically rigorous studies. We will continue to welcome submission of such manuscripts as regular articles. We also want to emphasize that there are no a priori page length limits for articles in the *JCI*, although succinctness and clarity remain important.

Expanded international presence. Over half of all *JCI* manuscript submissions are made

by scientists outside the United States, with Europe and Japan being the biggest contributors. In recognition of this, many of the newly added Consulting Editors, who comprise our core referees, are from outside the United States. In addition, we have established a new position, Senior European Editor, which will be filled by Marc Feldmann of Imperial College of Medicine in London. Part of Feldmann's role will be to enhance the visibility of the *JCI* in Europe and to keep us abreast of the needs and concerns of scientists outside the United States.

An effort to be reader friendly. We recognize that our readership's interests are just as broad as our content seeks to be. Moreover, we firmly believe that the science published in the *JCI* should be accessible to all readers, not just those who are specialists in the topic covered by a given manuscript. Authors will see a new emphasis placed on editing content for a broad audience, and we trust that our readers will notice the results.

A detailed conflict-of-interest policy. We believe it is in everyone's best interests for editors, in addition to authors, to publicly disclose their potential conflicts of interest and to explain how they will be dealt with. Senior Editor William Kelley and Executive Editor Ushma Neill, together with input from Marc Feldmann and Senior Editor Craig Thompson, have compiled what we believe is among the most detailed conflict-of-interest policy statements for editorial boards in biomedical publishing (3).

Many things will not change. The outstanding series of articles that appear in the front of the *JCI*, including scientific reviews, articles on science and society, commentaries on *JCI* research articles, news pieces, and book reviews, will continue. Acknowledging their critical contributions in the *JCI*, we have asked Ushma Neill and Science Editor Brooke Grindlinger to continue in their roles, and we are pleased to have recruited Karen Honey from *Nature Reviews Immunology* to the *JCI* as News and Reviews Editor. We also are fortunate to retain the entire production team, located at the *JCI*'s permanent offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Led by John Hawley and Karen Kosht, who have dual roles in both the ASCI and the *JCI*, this group works largely behind the scenes,



but their efforts are essential for publishing the journal.

Looking ahead, we face a number of challenges. Free online access, a hallmark of the *JCI*, comes at a cost of high publication charges for authors. Is this sustainable? Should the print version of the *JCI* be eliminated entirely? Which new media and business models will be needed to take full advantage of the online environment and stay current with state-of-the-art publishing models? These issues affect us all. As editors of the *JCI* we are cognizant of the trust that you, as authors and readers, place in us. We encourage your advice and suggestions in these and other matters.

The *JCI* could not exist without the support of two key constituencies: our authors and our referees. To the first, thank you for your continuing interest in publishing your best work with us. The new Penn editorial board will strive to give you fair reviews and speedy decisions. To the many scientists who have reviewed manuscripts for the *JCI* we owe a debt of gratitude as well, and the Penn editors and I trust we can continue to call on you during our term. We further acknowledge our parent organization, the ASCI, and thank them for giving us the opportunity to lead the *JCI*. Lastly, the Penn editors and I would like to thank Andrew Marks and his editorial colleagues

at Columbia for their fine stewardship of the *JCI*. They have set high standards for us, and we look forward to the challenge of meeting them.

Laurence A. Turka
Editor in Chief

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