Farewell and Hail: A Message From the Editor-in-Chief

Michael H. Alderman

As the AJH Editorial team completes its 10th year and prepares for the transition to a new editorial team it is fitting to again report on the State of the Journal.

The founding editor, John Laragh spelled out the AJH mission in its inaugural issue “to serve scientists and practitioners…we believe in peer review and practice it seriously…to…publish original scientific research…to…communicate new knowledge and opinion…. and… new modes of diagnosis and treatment.”1

While the “why” endures, the “how and what” has changed. The topics are generally familiar, and the Journal has continued to publish a spectrum of epidemiological, clinical, and basic science papers. However, the scope and nature of presentation is very different. A universal electronic connection has replaced print issues that are primarily mailed to Europe and America. Whole animal studies have been replaced by genomic analyses.

CONTENT

Some 180 of roughly 450 submissions of uninvited original articles are now selected for publication annually. Submissions mirror regional readership. The United States continues to lead in number of submissions. The sharp rise in articles from China may, in part, reflect the nearly 10-year association of AJH and the Chinese Journal of Hypertension. We exchange and publish 3 abstracts monthly.

Table 2 lists the 10 articles contributing most citations to the 2014 Impact Factor (IF). AJH remains 3rd among regular Hypertension Journals in IF. Disappointedly, in 2014, there was a sharp drop to 2.95 from 3.43 and 3.81 in the 2 preceding years. Hopefully, 2015 results will reveal this to have been an aberration from the recent pattern.

Tables 1 and 2 display the disproportional contribution of State-of-the-Art papers to citations and downloads. The large majority of the 67 of these published in the past 5 years have been invited. Topics have ranged from molecular biology to the “the P value in clinical Medicine.”

The mechanics of publication continue to improve. Time to 1st decision for an original manuscript is now 19 days, and accepted articles appear on-line within 3 weeks, and in print 4–5 months later. Author surveys conducted by Oxford University Press indicate author satisfaction rankings of 4.5–5 on a scale of 5.

READERSHIP

Volume 1 was available exclusively through a print distribution of about 4,000—largely to members of the American Society of Hypertension. There was no way to determine actual readership. However, steady growth seems apparent from the increasing number of citations.

Currently, 200 individuals continue to receive, each month’s printed edition. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of individuals around the globe have continuous access to the entire AJH archive—up to and including the latest article published on-line. This is made possible by the sale of subscriptions to nearly 3,000 libraries (plus 900 in low and middle income countries gratis). Associated individuals generally have access at no, or minimal, cost. Subscriptions have been steadily increasing since joining Oxford University Press in 2012. Over the past year, library subscriptions to AJH has risen by 310.

Electronic readership makes it possible to monitor usage. About 30,000 individuals view at least 1 article each month. Perhaps more significantly, an average of 15,000 articles/month are now downloaded to individual computers. Web delivery is roughly equal between North America, Europe, and Asia (including Australia). There were more than 180,000 thousand downloads in 2014. Table 2 lists he top 10 articles downloaded during the first year after on-line publication. The Graudal paper was featured on several TV news programs and widely reported in the world wide press.

THE EDITORIAL TEAM

I succeeded founding Editor-in-Chief John Laragh following 18 months as his Deputy. Laragh had a sharp eye for the novel, wrote with precision, and had the extraordinary capacity to craft titles both telling and compelling. Neither authority, nor commercial interest, nor fear of the unconventional, influenced publication. He happily gave voice to new investigators, as well as fresh insights from old scholars. He was decisive, never an uncertain trumpet, but respectful of disagreement if based on solid science. In short, he was the consummate role model and mentor.

Jon Blumenfeld and Charles Stier were, respectively, Clinical and Basic Science Executive Editors. In 2009, Hillel Cohen joined to primarily cover the growing number of population science manuscripts. Theodore Kotchen succeeded Jon Blumenfeld in 2012. I can imagine no more skillful, dedicated, and hardworking colleagues—for whom my respect and admiration has only deepened. During these past 10 years, there have been regular monthly in-person meetings.

Reference

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(Ted sometimes on Skype). Articles are discussed, topics to cover identified, Editorials and Commentaries assigned, as well as State-of-the-Art pieces commissioned. Broader issues of policy are aired, and, in league with Oxford University Press staff, manuscripts to be highlighted, as well to share with the Chinese Journal of Hypertension, are selected. These past 97 meetings, with lively discussion, motivated by a shared commitment to improving what we do, have been a high point of my tenure. I have learned much from my colleagues, with a growing respect and admiration for their intellect, congeniality, and uncommon good sense. What an honor it has been to be a part of this warm hearted and generous team.

The overall process has been made whole by our indefatigable Managing Editor Yvonne Raiford. She has shepherded each submission from arrival, through review, final decision, and smooth transition to an Oxford University Press publication. Yvonne also is the comforting interface between AJH and all its constituents. With tolerance for all our foibles, patient interaction with impatient or disappointed authors, and gentle reminders to tardy reviewers, Yvonne ensures that nothing falls between the cracks. All of this would not have been possible without the outstanding contributions of our indefatigable OUP colleagues Ashley Petrylak and Rachel Warren.

**THE FUTURE**

AJH, and similar medical journals, must adapt to an avalanche of scientific research product and the multiplying and variety of platforms for its dissemination. The Web of Science listed 17,718 articles about hypertension in 2014, while Google “about 10,100,000” such references in the same year. Search engines are efficient and effective at finding, but do not yet assess that material.

The challenge is to sustain our mission to find, assess, and publish material of value in this challenging environment. A mythical past, in which a small number of Journals were curators of biomedical science, surely no longer exists. The web has leveled the field for authors to publish, and readers to access, individual articles. This capacity to bypass traditional journals, like AJH, challenges their ability to maintain a central role in scientific exchange. We believe that our rigorous Editorial and peer review process adds real value to investigators and practitioners. AJH must find additional ways to strengthen our attachment to authors and readers. New tools for actual (or maybe virtual) connection between authors, journals, and readers must be developed.

**HAIL**

AJH is indeed fortunate that Ernesto Schiffrin will become the 3rd Editor-in-Chief of American Journal of Hypertension on 1 January 2016. He currently serves as Physician-in-Chief, Sir Mortimer B. Davis-Jewish General Hospital Canada Research Chair and Director, Hypertension and Vascular
Editorial

Professor Schifrin’s decades long career of basic and clinical research has resulted in seminal contributions to understanding vascular behavior. His experiments have made fundamental contributions to the science of cardiovascular medicine, as well as insights relevant to pharmacological and clinical advances.

As a leader in medical science community, Professor Schiffrin has been an active participant in international policy committees, and presided over virtually every Hypertension Society for which he has been eligible. Of particular relevance here is his long and valued service as Associate Editor of Hypertension. This breadth of knowledge and experience promises that AJH will continue the tradition of John Laragh as it enters its 4th decade.

REFERENCES


Table 2. Top 10 downloaded articles during the year after publication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Full-text downloads</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graudal N, Jürgens G, Baslund B, Alderman M*</td>
<td>Compared With Usual Sodium Intake, Low- and Excessive-Sodium Diets Are Associated With Increased Mortality: A Meta-Analysis</td>
<td>18,772</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miller PE, Van Elsywyk M, Alexander DD*</td>
<td>Long-Chain Omega-3 Fatty Acids Eicosapentaenoic Acid and Docosahexaenoic Acid and Blood Pressure: A Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarron DA, Kazaks AD, Geerling JC, Graudal NA</td>
<td>Normal Range of Human Dietary Sodium Intake: A Perspective Based on 24-Hour Urinary Sodium Excretion Worldwide</td>
<td>1,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schultz MG, Otahal P, Cleland VJ et al</td>
<td>Exercise-Induced Hypertension, Cardiovascular Events, and Mortality in Patients Undergoing Exercise Stress Testing: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis</td>
<td>1,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sealey JE, Alderman MH, Furberg CD, Laragh JH</td>
<td>Renin-Angiotensin System Blockers May Create More Risk Than Reward for Sodium-Depleted Cardiovascular Patients With High Plasma Renin Levels</td>
<td>991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerber LM, Mann SJ, McDonald MV et al</td>
<td>Diuretic Use in Black Patients With Uncontrolled Hypertension</td>
<td>872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katout M, Hong Z, Rutsky J et al</td>
<td>Effect of GLP-1 Mimetics on Blood Pressure and Relationship to Weight Loss and Glycemia Lowering: Results of a Systematic Meta-Analysis and Meta-Regression</td>
<td>843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayalath VH, de Souza RJ, Sievenpiper JL et al</td>
<td>Effect of Dietary Pulses on Blood Pressure: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Controlled Feeding Trials</td>
<td>794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanaki AI, Sarafidis PA, Georgianos PI et al</td>
<td>Effects of Low-Dose Atorvastatin on Arterial Stiffness and Central Aortic Pressure Augmentation in Patients With Hypertension and Hypercholesterolemia</td>
<td>786</td>
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