Toward a More Effective and Efficient Communication Process

Because of the dynamic events occurring in health care, medical education, and biomedical research, it seems that we are destined to cross a threshold that will greatly change the health care and biomedical research enterprise. On the one hand, we perceive an atmosphere of uncertainty about the future and how we will fare. Physician-investigators are being confronted with greater pressures that will influence how they allocate their efforts and how much time they will have for research. All investigators will continue to compete for the limited resources that are available. On the more positive side, the scope of basic research that is relevant to the hypertension field has grown greatly, and there are more opportunities for interacting multidisciplinary avenues of investigation.

Through this wave of change, however, there will be the continuing need to communicate with our colleagues. Where is there such a thirst and need to communicate if not in science? We attend meetings at great expense to exchange our thoughts and feelings with those who will listen and share our interests. We work with great vigor and enthusiasm to have our papers accepted in the best peer-reviewed journals so that our results are available for posterity. That drive to communicate with colleagues who share common interests is the raison d'être for Hypertension.

Hypertension has undergone many changes since it first appeared in 1979. Each group of editors has left its lasting imprint, contributing greatly to the enduring success of the journal. It is important, however, to emphasize the sage advice provided by Dr Harriet Dustan and her associate editors in the 1979 inaugural issue: "The field of hypertension is multidisciplinary and the journal will serve a purpose only if it provides bridges among the many disciplines. It must stimulate thought and air scientific controversies. It must be a forum not only for results of laboratory but also of clinical research. It must inform its readers of events happening outside the sphere of the laboratory and the medical center that may impinge upon our ability to do research or on the care of hypertensive patients. It must serve the science of hypertension and promote the better care of hypertensive patients."

How well have we achieved these requirements up to now? Most of us would say that the journal has met them admirably and with excellence. As the new editors, we will strive to build on that record of success. Changes will be carefully considered so that they truly provide a net gain and improve the journal further. Nevertheless, we must recognize and respond to the changing times and growing pressures. Many of these responses will involve practical considerations that will facilitate and improve communication.

All changes to the journal will be based on the simple but most important premise that we exist to serve you—collectively, as a group dedicated to the understanding and control of arterial pressure and cardiovascular function in normal and pathologic states. You also exist as an association dedicated to reducing morbidity and mortality from cardiovascular disease; as clinicians and clinician-scientists who treat patients with hypertension and other cardiovascular diseases; and as investigators who strive to understand the fundamental pathophysiological, cellular, membrane, and molecular derangements responsible for cardiovascular dysfunction. We also understand the importance of serving you, individually, as a reader and, hopefully, as a contributor to Hypertension. As a reader, you want to learn more about the newest and most exciting findings in areas of critical interest. You also want to know more about the developments in areas outside your major interests. As a contributor, you want efficient, timely, and fair treatment of your treasured manuscripts, and you want rapid publication of your findings. Sometimes, however, our responsibility to you, collectively, may unfortunately have priority over our desire to serve you, individually, as we strive to publish the very best papers in the hypertension literature. However, whenever unfavorable decisions occur, we will do our best to provide you with explicit reasons as to why a manuscript was found unacceptable for publication. You should also realize that you have the prerogative to write us with your comments, concerns, and ideas about the peer review process. In particular, it is important that we remain vigilant in protecting the right to discuss conflicting views and controversial theories. The peer review process depends strongly on a mutual respect for opposing opinions and interpretations, and all reviewers must continuously guard against any conflicting interests that would influence their ability to provide an objective and fair review.

As a contributor, you can do much to minimize the likelihood of unfavorable decisions. Often, the major problems are related to inadequate communication and preparation. A little extra time spent in carefully reviewing the manuscript and getting all authors to consider means to optimize effective and efficient communication will pay great dividends by improving the likelihood of success. Another helpful strategy is to get an informed but uninvolved colleague to critique the paper before you formally submit it. Most importantly, send us your best work in a succinct and well-organized manner. Complete studies that allow firm conclusions will have the greatest probability of acceptance. If you are not very excited about the work, the reviewers will probably have similar reactions. Try to be as objective as possible in interpreting your results. We should also recognize
that the demands on our time continue to increase so that anything you do to deliver your message succinctly will contribute to an increased readership.

In an effort to avoid redundancies, we ask that introduction and methods sections be concise and brief. Take advantage of previously published descriptions and refer to routine methodology briefly without repeating all the details. If the current study strongly depends on detailed methodology previously published, it is acceptable to reference the method and enclose the relevant paper (in duplicate) for the reviewers rather than detailing a lengthy, "in brief" section. Avoid use of outmoded terms that are no longer valid or have been supplanted by more modern descriptors. Presentation of results should avoid redundancies in tables, figures, and text as much as possible but without compromising this most important section. Finally, the discussion allows you to interpret your results and place your data in perspective. However, the discussion is not the place for a long, tedious, detailed literature review of the field. Throughout the manuscript, statements about primacy (ie, "we show for the first time") are inappropriate and should be avoided. References should be carefully screened and primarily should include original peer reviewed investigations rather than reviews or chapters.

If all of us put extra effort into achieving some of these goals, the overall quality of all manuscripts will be improved, and the collective effort to reduce the length of the papers may make it possible to increase the number of papers per issue within the available space allotted. The new editorial office is committed to serving you using the most modern techniques available. We will strive to be creative, innovative, and efficient. Your papers will be assigned quickly, the reviewers will be asked to respond promptly, and decisions will be rendered within the shortest time possible. We ask you to remain vigilant and provide us with feedback and creative suggestions on any issues that you feel need attention. In particular, we want your ideas about how best to present the various sections. For example, does "Original Contributions" suggest that the others are not original? Should we retain "Brief or Rapid Communications" or should we strive to make them all as rapid as possible? What topics do you want to see covered as reviews, tutorials, or special articles? This is your journal and we are eager and committed to maintaining the excellent record that it has already established and to positioning it to continue in its leadership role during these exciting years ahead.

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