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Reflections Before Moving Forward

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Kohl and Hootman are the outgoing Editors-in-Chief of the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, a role they have held since 2007. Kohl is with the Dept of Kinesiology and Health Education, University of Texas at Austin, and is the Founder and President of the International Society of Physical Activity and Health. Hootman is with the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA

As 5 years have somehow slipped away since we took the helm of the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* (JPAH), it is helpful to reflect on where we have been and where we may be going.

In many ways, the changes we have had at JPAH in the past 5 years have mirrored the changes in the field of physical activity and health. Our field has grown tremendously, not necessarily a maturation into adulthood, but certainly more like a child that is starting to demand more attention. The same can be said for JPAH. After Co-Editors Morrow and Blair successfully completed the Herculean task of founding JPAH, we began our term with a small scholarly journal that was published 4 times per year in a 6×9 format. The first few issues of JPAH were thin and accepted manuscripts were rushed into print given the lack of a backlog.

As we begin the ninth year of publication, JPAH currently is published 8 times per year in a full-size 8.5×11 format. The publishing capacity of the once quarterly journal has increased 166% in the past 5 years. In 2011, more than 400 manuscripts were submitted for consideration for publication to the *Journal*. The breadth of submissions has been truly fascinating. Contributions now include all corners of our field: health effects of physical activity; behavioral and environmental determinants of physical activity; exercise science and kinesiology; public health practice; physical activity assessment and surveillance; and physical activity policy. We are witnessing the growth of a new field and we believe JPAH has helped define and feed that growth. If this is indeed the case, we are confident we have done our part for the field.

In addition to the regular publication schedule, JPAH has published nine supplemental issues since 2006. The topics of these supplements have varied: Physical Activity Assessment and Surveillance, Physical Activity Research in Latin America, Physical Activity Policy; Capacity-building in Physical Activity and Public Health, among others. Many of these supplemental issues are open access, thereby allowing readership to expand far beyond our subscriber base.

In 2009, the International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) was founded. JPAH became the key membership benefit of ISPAH as the society, still also in its infancy, seeks to advance health through the scientific study and promotion of physical activity. We

trust that ISPAH will soon fill a void and take its place as the international leader to advance physical activity as a health and science priority. Such leadership is crucial, particularly in low- and middle-income countries that face the coming noncommunicable disease tsunami. Physical activity will remain a key to dealing with these emerging problems. As ISPAH grows, so too will JPAH.

Administratively, the impact and prestige of the Journal has grown tremendously in the previous 5 years. In 2007, we succeeded in becoming indexed in Medline and in PubMed. This accomplishment allowed for much easier electronic access to papers published in the journal. PubMed can now be fairly referred to as the “world's library,” and having JPAH indexed there has helped our efforts substantially.

After much suspense, in 2011, JPAH succeeded in obtaining an Impact Factor rating from the prestigious Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Reports. Our initial Impact Factor (1.857) places JPAH solidly in the top 50% of journals in the Public, Environmental, and Occupational Health category. Although surprising to some, this outstanding initial rating is likely due to the hole that JPAH is filling—addressing research and practice in physical activity and health. We are confident that this Impact Factor will rise substantially in the coming years and with it JPAH's influence. Perhaps most importantly, citations of research in JPAH seem to be appearing frequently in conferences, symposia, and classrooms (personal observations). Each of these milestones has been important in and of themselves. Taken together, they are more evidence of our field as it grows and seeks to improve health through physical activity.

Despite our exciting growth, challenges remain. A growing field needs more quality research published in all areas. Even with the increased number of issues and pages with each issue, not all papers are published. At our current rate of submissions, only about 1 in every 4 papers submitted will eventually get published. These decisions are extremely hard to make. We trust that our decisions have helped to improve the quality of the science in physical activity and health.

We are pleased that Loretta DiPietro, Ph.D., will be taking over as Editor-in-Chief of JPAH beginning in 2012. Loretta is a distinguished scientist who brings new energy and creativity to the difficult task of being an editor. The future of scientific publishing is being tested like never before with the demand for more immediate information and differing formats. The sheer volume of submissions, coupled with the emergence of electronic media, has strained the “old school” way of doing things. The challenge for JPAH is to respond to those stimuli to continue to innovate, grow, and be the relevant global publication outlet for science and practice related to physical activity and health. There is much room to grow and to continue to help define the field.

It has been a true privilege to have served as Co-Editors of JPAH for the past 5 years. With privilege, however, comes responsibility. Our responsibility lies in acknowledging those who have helped us over the years. The list of people who have made this transformation of JPAH and the field of physical activity and health possible is too long to comprehend. Specifically, our appreciation is extended to the Associate Editors and JPAH Editorial

Board. This small group of skilled scientists and practitioners from around the world has helped to give the Journal its needed credibility. Kim G. McCallum and Kristina Theis, as Editorial Managers, helped us tremendously with the administrative tasks necessary to the processing of manuscripts. Thanks to Rainer and Julie Martens, Greg Reed, Doug Hoepker, Jack Wolowiec, Monica Wells, Cathe Capel, and the entire Journals division at Human Kinetics. Thank you to the hundreds of peer-reviewers who have given their valuable time to improve manuscripts. We have never seen a manuscript that was not improved by the peer-review process.

We look forward to watching JPAH grow and mature more in the years to come under the leadership of Dr. DiPietro.

Acknowledgments

The findings and conclusions in this editorial are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.