
EDITORIAL

Reinventing *Public Health Reports*: An Open Letter to Our Readers

We plan some changes at *Public Health Reports* (*PHR*). *PHR*, now 115 years old, will continue to bring you valuable information on the public health mission, but we want to do more.

We will retain the now familiar rainbow covers that are the journal's signature, frequently adding photographs like the ones from the Public Health Service mission to Zaire.

In addition to *PHS Chronicles*, *Data Line*, *Public Health Reports in Brief*, and *Public Health Programs and Practices*, we will start several new features; *Public Health and Law* will report on new legislation and case law important to public health; a regular *Review* will provide a critical assessment of best selling books (and maybe an occasional film) that impinge on public health; *Minority Health Monitor* will report on the four groups PHS is legally charged to serve and protect; the *Overseas Observer* will describe developments abroad that are important for public health in the United States, and there may be additional features as we find editors and writers ready to contribute.

We will invite leading figures in public health to write short, hard hitting commentaries to frame the debate on key policies and programs. A single contributed paper may form the focus for three or four short critiques or essays. Scholarly contributions will continue as a cornerstone of *Public Health Reports*, but we will not be satisfied unless we can provide our reader with a sense of the importance of the research.

Public Health Reports is already a bargain at \$14 for six issues, but we will spare no effort to expand

our circulation. Special mailing arrangements should make it possible for all State public health associations to offer *PHR* as a membership benefit. Similarly, students and faculty of the 30 schools of public health are an important target, and we will make sure they receive *PHR*.

Our dreams about how to run a modern scientific journal are more ambitious than our current capacity, but we will watch the information superhighway for ways we can improve our review and editorial process and ways to make the ever increasing quantity of useful material we receive available to readers of printed material and electronic information. For example, if we could use electronic communication to cut the time from submission to publication in half, *PHR* would be more timely for readers and far more attractive for authors.

Can we give everyone engaged in protecting the health of the public a sense of the mission and understanding of the science, policies, and programs that contribute to it? We hope that the new *PHR* will solidify the identity of public health and the Public Health Service as we enter the 21st century. We hope it will provide the public health community with a forum on science, policy, and programs that enhances debate and discussion and encourages new solutions to the public health problems of the nation.

As the new editor, I welcome your comments, criticisms, and occasional words of encouragement as we go about reinvention. Join us in our challenge.

Anthony Robbins, MD
Editor