A final assessment

AJHP has been my primary career focus for the past 37 years. I am retiring at the end of 2014. Since joining the Journal staff in January 1978, I have read more than 20,000 submissions; we have published only about half of them, disappointing about 10,000 sets of authors. I want to convey my sincere regrets for dashing their hopes of contributing to the AJHP permanent archive. Their fate was the byproduct of our efforts to maintain the high regard in which AJHP has been held since its inception. Within a finite budget, we have published the submissions that we believed would best portray advancements in pharmacy practice. Perhaps this ever-growing record has encouraged some to strive to achieve more.

See also pages 2121 and 2123.

Looking back over my decades as an editor, the most persistent transformation in the Journal’s content has been the steady increase in the number of submissions describing clinical services and clinical research. For 12 years (1982–93), ASHP published a separate journal, Clinical Pharmacy, to showcase this growth. In 1994, this content was brought back into AJHP. Clinical services had become a mainstream activity of our members.

The former chief editors of AJHP were well-known thought leaders in pharmacy, and they published editorials regularly on controversial issues of the time. By my count, Donald E. Francke, chief editor for more than 21 years, authored 177 editorials in his AJHP stewardship; George P. Provost, chief editor for more than 8 years, authored 91 editorials; and William A. Zellmer, in his more than 18 years as chief editor, authored 195 editorials and invited 105 others. Zellmer authored 38 more editorials in the ensuing years. I have been AJHP’s chief editor for more than 22 years, authored 90 editorials, and invited 233 others. Unfortunately, all AJHP and Clinical Pharmacy content published before 1997 is stored only in paper archives. I hope that someday ASHP will digitize and post this important back file before it turns to dust.

On the basis of readership surveys and measurements of how often AJHP content is read, it appears that the Journal has been a valued service to most of ASHP’s members and AJHP’s readers for many years. The editors, authors, and reviewers have strived to create accurate descriptions of innovations and sound scientific evidence germane to contemporary pharmacy practice. Submissions have grown from about 300 in 1978 to more than three times that this year. Simultaneously, our acceptance rate has dropped, from about 51% in 1978 to about 32% in 2013. The current rate of acceptance is very similar to rates of comparable pharmacy journals. AJHP’s impact factor, an external measure of how often and how quickly a journal’s recent articles are cited, has tripled since 1983. This trend, too, parallels the impact factors of comparable pharmacy journals. In contrast, AJHP has published about 2000 pages of editorial content every year since 1984, much more than that published by comparable journals. Also, in the past 10 years, AJHP has excelled in the adoption of electronic enhancements of value to our readers: online full text, distribution on the Kindle reader, development of a mobile optimized version, addition of audio components, and implementation of augmented reality. More innovations will surely follow.

In my editorial career, one event stands out sharply: In 2007, ASHP and AJHP were sued by a product manufacturer that claimed it had been defamed through criticism and test results published in an AJHP article. Editors were deposed, and, in 2009, a federal court ruled that there was no malice or basis for the suit. This ruling is important to the entire world of scientific publishing in that it upheld the rights of authors, reviewers, and editors to convey candid, fact-based opinions and publish results without fear of retribution.

In this reflection, I am compelled to acknowledge those who helped me professionally beyond measure. The first was my residency preceptor and boss, Leo F. Godley. Leo was an ASHP charter member, an ASHP president, and a Harvey A. K. Whitney Lecture awardee. He created an advanced practice in the early 1970s in which I worked for seven years, introduced me to many leaders in pharmacy practice and at ASHP, and facilitated my hosting of former AJHP editor Don Francke for a weekend in Fort Worth. The man who guided me so patiently in my evolution as an editor is the well-known pharmacy thought leader William A. Zellmer. I have tried to uphold the principles, ethics, and lofty ideals of pharmacy that these men demonstrated. And without question, I have gathered an abundance of insights from the highly intelligent and dedicated editors, interns, and publishing production experts with whom I have worked over these many years. It has been an incredibly rewarding experience.

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