

EDITORIAL

Changing of the Guard

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It is an honour to be writing to the readership as the incoming Editor-in-Chief for *The Journal of Physiology*. The opportunity to lead this journal, with its storied history, is certainly one of the most important professional highlights of my career. I am also making history. I am the first woman to serve as Editor-in-Chief in the 138 years since *The Journal* was founded, which seems fitting because my appointment was announced in the year that The Physiological Society celebrated the centenary of admitting women to The Society's membership. I hope my appointment can signal to young women, and all other groups traditionally under-represented in the academy, that change is possible. I am also the first Editor-in-Chief of any of The Society's journals, to the best of my knowledge, to be resident outside the UK and Ireland, and while I am British by birth and passport this point underscores the wholly international character of *The Journal*. Fully 90% of our downloads originate from outside the UK, along with almost 90% of our submissions and 88% of papers published.

I have a long-standing interest in, and engagement with, scholarly publishing, including a term earlier in my career as Editor-in-Chief of the *American Journal of Physiology - Cell Physiology* and 6 years as Chair of the Publications Committee of the American Physiological Society. I feel especially well prepared to take on my new editorial role, having served on *The Journal's* Editorial Board for almost 10 years at this point, first as a Reviewing Editor and then for the past 5 years as Deputy Editor-in-Chief for the Americas, under the leadership of outgoing Editor-in-Chief David Paterson. This background has given me great insights into the current status of *The Journal* and its accomplishments, as well as new opportunities on the horizon. Indeed, I am hugely grateful to David for adding me to his Executive Committee, as well as for the many advances he has brought to *The Journal*. On David's watch, we have seen the addition of new editorial

features, a more expansive international strategy (including engagement with key constituencies at international meetings) and new media approaches to highlight both physiology and physiologists. *The Journal* has also grown in stature during David's term. It is ranked at the top of all journals in the discipline of physiology for its total number of citations per year, and fifth in terms of its 2014 Impact Factor (5.037), with only one research (as opposed to review) journal, which is highly specialized, ranked more highly. While I would be the first to recognize that Impact Factor is a very imperfect measure of journal quality, there is no denying that it exerts a disproportionate influence on some scientists when they are deciding where to submit their work, to say nothing of its misuse by funding bodies, promotion committees and national governments. Because of this, it will be my goal to maintain *The Journal's* exceptional reputation for fair, detailed, constructive and timely peer review, while also maintaining the current rigor of the process. Readers of *The Journal* can expect to find articles that reflect the very best of physiological research, providing novel and deep insights into mechanisms that underpin health and disease at the cellular, organ, systems or integrative level.

My editorial goals for *The Journal*, of course, will depend fully on the hard work of our dedicated Editorial Board and leadership. It is my intent to broaden the base for executive decision-making by incorporating all of the Senior Editors into a new Leadership Team, which will guide our editorial direction. We will be adding Laura Bennet (Auckland), Janet Taylor (Sydney) and Harold Schultz (Omaha) to the team of continuing Senior Editors, including Ole Paulsen (Cambridge), Don Bers (Davis), Scott Powers (Gainesville), Mike Hogan (San Diego), Jaideep Bains (Calgary) and Peking Fong (Lawrence). Yoshihiro Kubo (currently Deputy Editor-in-Chief for Asia/Pacific, from Okazaki) will continue as a Senior Editor and David Grundy (Sheffield) will remain as the Senior Ethics Editor, while Ian Forsythe (Leicester) will move from his current role as Senior Reviews Editor to that of Deputy Editor-in-Chief. Finally, Ole Petersen (Cardiff) will join the team as

our new Senior Reviews Editor. We will be saying goodbye, with deep gratitude, not only to David Paterson, but also to Julian Paton (Deputy Editor-in-Chief for Europe), Simon Gandevia (Senior Editor) and Jerry Dempsey (CrossTalk Editor) when their terms expire (at the end of March, June and March, respectively). They have all made wonderful contributions to *The Journal*, and they will be missed. Parenthetically, a search for a new CrossTalk Editor is pending a retreat of the Leadership Team, to be held in April 2016, to review all features of the current *Journal*. Another vital goal for the Leadership Team will be to rationalize the overall Editorial Board, making it more nimble and aligning the expertise of its constituent Reviewing Editors with our content, while ensuring diverse representation in terms of gender, geography and career stage. The Reviewing Editors are the lynchpin of our reputation, upon whom we rely to ensure the excellence of what we publish, as well as consistency in our editorial standards. Thus, establishing a robust pipeline of outstanding editors to replace those whose terms are expiring will be a key priority in the coming months.

The foregoing appears to take as a given that we know what our content will be, and yet that will also be an important topic for debate by the Leadership Team at our upcoming retreat. *The Journal* has a very special role, seeking to attract work in all areas of the discipline. Traditionally, we have had great strength in muscle, exercise and integrative physiology, cardiovascular physiology, and several aspects of neuroscience. Nevertheless, while their volume has been less, we have also published highly influential papers in other areas, and we will actively seek to expand submissions in these subdisciplines and thereby broaden our appeal. We are very much open for business in alimentary, endocrine, renal and respiratory physiology! I will also reach out to those communities who represent our traditional supporters and solicit their continued loyalty as well as their suggestions for representatives on the Editorial Board. Personally, I subscribe to a wide-ranging definition of physiology and will welcome work from colleagues in sister disciplines such as cell biology, immunology, biochemistry and pharmacology. I will also place emphasis on the translational

aspects of our discipline, reinforcing the place of physiology as a cornerstone of medical practice, and will encourage integration of the latest techniques and methodologies to extend physiological insights. Our editors will encourage authors to identify outstanding questions in their manuscripts and will engage in debates on what is needed to move the field forward. We will also ensure that *The Journal* upholds the highest standards for data reproducibility and ethical use of animals in research, ensuring that *The Journal of Physiology* will stand the test of time and represent a solid foundation for subsequent work. We have already made strides in this direction by providing detailed statistical guidelines and by requesting the upload of original data, but we will identify ways to do more, in consultation with The Physiological Society and other stakeholders.

I touched on the importance of the international reach of *The Journal* at the beginning of this essay, and return to this theme here. In recent years, we have enjoyed the support of a truly international board of world-leading scientists, while retaining the benefits of a lasting association with the robust Physiological Society in the UK. Recognizing that many of our authors and readers may never be able to attend a Physiological Society meeting, the Editorial

Board and I will strengthen efforts to engage with our constituencies 'where they live', attending international conferences and sponsoring symposia at these venues. This will be particularly important in regions where the scientific enterprise is growing rapidly, such as China and Brazil. We already have plans for a symposium to be held at the 2016 International Conference of Physiological Sciences, which is taking place this September in Beijing, China. This meeting is jointly organized by a consortium of national physiological societies including the Chinese Association of Physiological Sciences and The Physiological Society, and many others. The upcoming 2017 IUPS meeting in Rio de Janeiro will similarly offer the opportunity to reach out to South America. In all of these venues, I am particularly interested in engaging with students and other early-stage investigators who represent the future of the discipline and *The Journal*. We plan to organize focus groups to discover what this next generation is looking for in a venue to publish their work and will provide insights into the peer review process through 'Meet the Editor' events. This conversation is particularly important at a time when the landscape for scientific publishing continues to evolve rapidly and researchers are confronted with a huge variety of different options

for disseminating the results of their research.

In closing, I want to underscore my firm belief that the most important role for any journal editor is to serve as the advocate for her authors. In this vein, we will continue to mount workshops for those who are new to scientific publishing, especially in the emerging research communities discussed above. I am also passionate about the role of peer review in shaping and improving manuscripts. It is a (very) rare submission that cannot be improved and made more definitive in its conclusions by responding to the suggestions of experts in the field. And yet, recognizing that there is always 'one more experiment' that can be done, we will ensure that our editorial process does not result in endless rounds of requests for additional work that more properly would be the beginning of the next story. I hope you will look to *The Journal* for its ability to illuminate all areas of our diverse discipline, and that you will consider us first when deciding where to submit your very best work. My electronic 'door' also will always be open should you wish to share any comments, concerns or suggestions. In accepting my new role, I aim to be fully deserving of the trust placed in me by the physiological community.