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Editorial

## Beyond Our Boundaries: *The Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2019



Transitions offer opportunities to expand into new areas and challenge the boundaries of our discipline. This final issue of my 15-year tenure as Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Adolescent Health* (JAH) allows me to reflect on the successes of the past and challenges the future.

I remember writing my first editorial, “Transitions,” and the excitement that I felt in outlining my ideas for improving JAH and its position in the scientific literature [1]. I addressed a number of concerns: Was I establishing the right tone for our Journal? Were my messages about the future of the journal clear and well received? Would the membership of the Society for Adolescent Medicine (at that time, it was SAM) and our broader audience accept our proposed expanded mission? To assist me in this mission, I named five new Associate Editors with expertise in youth development, behavioral/psychosocial sciences, international health, clinical/health sciences, and public policy/public health. I also sought to bring clarity and focus to the unique position laid out plainly in our journal’s name: the *Journal of Adolescent Health*. I would expand the Journal’s purview to include the cutting-edge work from the broader field of adolescent health. This required moving out of our comfort zone, recognizing that, although Medicine is important, our journal would need to be far more inclusive of other disciplines if we were to honor our commitment to improving the lives of adolescents and young adults.

In 2004, I declared that “the *Journal of Adolescent Health* needs to spread its wings. The Journal has an opportunity to build a bridge between medicine and health and the other disciplines essential for improving the well-being of adolescents and young adults [1].” This challenge opened a unique niche for our journal, ranging from basic biological and behavioral sciences to public health and policy. During the early years of my tenure at JAH, many readers and SAM members expressed concern about the decreasing attention to Medicine in the Journal. They were perplexed that the appointed Associate Editors reflected a broader range of disciplines than the Society’s membership at the time. We listened to their concerns but remained steadfast in our commitment to publish the best in the biological, psychological, and public health sciences. The niche that we have carved out for the Journal has allowed us to tackle the most critical issues in adolescent health: abstinence pledges and their outcomes, new vaccines and immunization policies, the content of preventive healthcare for adolescents and young adults, transgender healthcare, youth homelessness, the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAMers) Act and immigration, the impact of the U.S. Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and the critical importance of young adulthood in the third decade of life [2].

In some ways, it was that final issue that has proven most consequential for the Journal. As our tenure as editors matured, we came to recognize that, similar to adolescence, young adulthood represented a critical period of growth and transition [3]. In 2010, we established a new tagline for the cover of JAH, “Improving the Lives of Adolescents and Young Adults,” and affirmatively increased our focus on issues particular to young adults. Currently, approximately 25% of the articles published in JAH focus on this period of the life span. In a similar way, recognizing that more than 85% of the world’s young people live in low- and middle-income countries, we have welcomed research from the International Community to the pages of JAH [4,5]. Currently, 55% of JAH’s manuscript submissions come from outside of the U.S. In our ongoing efforts to engage with the global community, over the past 15 years, we will have published more than 20 supplements and special issues specifically focused on critical health issues for young people throughout the world.

The journey has had its ups and downs: brilliant science, flawed science, disappointed authors, elated authors, deadlines to meet, the increasing demand for speedy reviews, engagement with the mainstream media, distortion by the mainstream media, insightful reviewers, unhelpful reviewers, and the plague of plagiarism. The most rewarding part of my 15-year tenure has been serving as Editor-in-Chief of a Journal that attracts the latest and best science, having the resources to provide critical reviews of that science quickly and efficiently and publishing those cutting-edge findings in plenty of time to make a clear difference in the lives of adolescents and young adults. Of special note, our fast-tracking system recently enabled us to take two papers—on the crucially important policy issues of homelessness and immigration—from submission to publication in less than 2 months [6,7]. Crucially, none of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our Managing Editor, Tor D. Berg, and our Editorial Analyst, Teresa Dal Santo.

As we look forward to the future, there is still much more to be done for adolescents and young adults. Our Journal, by now, should be experienced and comfortable in moving beyond the boundaries that we often create in our disciplines, organizations, cultures, and academic towers. We must embrace the changing nature of health, science, technology, and publishing. JAH is fortunate to have Dr. Carol Ford as our incoming Editor-in-Chief. Dr. Ford is an Internist/Pediatrician and Adolescent Medicine Specialist and an established investigator based in Philadelphia, PA. She will bring a new perspective to the Journal, as well as a continued commitment to integrity, wisdom, and the health and well-being of young people.

Under Dr. Ford's leadership, *JAH* will continue achieving new heights and transcending new boundaries.

As a final note, I would like to thank the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM) and its leadership for supporting the decisions and actions that we undertook while serving as *JAH's* editors. The Society and its officers have been willing and eager supporters, allowing *JAH* to transition from its humble origins to the world's leading scientific journal focused on the health and well-being of our adolescents and young adults.

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