The Journal of Perinatology: Past, Present and Future

Edward E. Lawson, MD

As I assume the role of the new Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Perinatology*, this is my first opportunity to express appreciation for the work of past editors, to recognize the current state of the *Journal of Perinatology* and to state my goals for the future of our Journal. The history of the Journal demonstrates the twisting path by which journals often grow and develop and the dedication of a few individuals that is critical for success. Gilbert Martin and Jeffrey Pomerance began the Journal in 1980 during the era of strong perinatal associations throughout the United States. Initially they published two issues annually and their goal was to concentrate on topics of relevance to the California Perinatal Association, the initial organizational sponsor. As is the current practice, those initial issues published articles relating to each of the professional groups caring for infants. However, the Journal has continued to grow throughout its 20-year history. With Dr. Martin's guidance, the Journal expanded to four annual issues and was first cited in *Index Medicus* in 1987 when 99 articles were published. By 1993, six issues per year were published with 102 different cited articles. The Journal now publishes annually 8 issues with over 160 articles and it continues to cover an extensive multidisciplinary array of topics. The Journal had several different organizational sponsors including the National Perinatal Association. In addition, the Journal has evolved and is now the official journal of the Section on Perinatal Pediatrics of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Dr. Martin has shepherded the Journal throughout this extensive history. In addition to his role as the Editor-in-Chief, he has written numerous editorials emphasizing major topics affecting delivery of perinatal/neonatal medicine. Despite this changeover of the Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Martin will continue to be an active member of the editorial board. His love of writing and critical concern for our profession and patients are evident in each of his past editorials and many other articles. His baby, the Journal, is now growing up, indeed if I were to assign an appropriate CPT code I believe 99298 would be correct.

The growth of the Journal generally reflects the growth of our discipline. Over the past 20 years perinatologists and neonatologists have emerged from being consultative specialists to being primary caregivers for high-risk mothers and their infants. Perinatology and

neonatology were initially built on a consultative regional care model helping general obstetricians, pediatricians and family practice physicians to care for their high-risk patients. Through the years we have trained many practitioners who have now aggregated into group practices in community hospitals and academic centers. Though much decried, the concept of regional oversight has largely devolved to a competitive managed care model. Perinatologists, neonatologists and our affiliated professional colleagues have organized into large national groups concerned about developing and maintaining clinical standards, training of new professionals, and producing research for improved "evidence-based" care of our patients. With this growth and specialization comes reduced relevance of our specialty to the training of generalist gynecologists, obstetricians and pediatricians. Further, reduced generalist training in neonatology and increased emphasis for primary care practice models that concentrate on outpatient care have reduced the ability and interest of general practitioners to participate in high-risk perinatal care, and in some cases, even in care of normal pregnancies and newborn infants. Hence, specialized practitioners of maternal fetal medicine and neonatology, have become the de facto major providers of care during the prenatal, perinatal and antenatal periods.

As a discipline develops the core literature for that discipline increases,¹ and, in my opinion, becomes more critical to continued growth. Previously, the core literature for Perinatology has been diffused throughout the primary care journals of our respective specialties of obstetrics, pediatrics and perinatal nursing. A few subspecialty journals, of which the *Journal of Perinatology* is one, have been present for a protracted period, but they have generally not fully developed due to insufficient readership and consequent reduced impact on the literature. I believe the time has come to concentrate our core literature into a small group of journals that enhances the ability of each of us to quickly assimilate the new information continually being produced by our clinical and basic science scholars. The recent recognition of the *Journal of Perinatology* as the "official" journal of the Section on Perinatal Pediatrics is one large step to increasing the subscribers to the Journal and thereby strengthen and focus our core literature. I suggest the time has come for authors to concentrate their submissions to the few core journals available within our multidisciplinary specialty and to divest ourselves of continued publication in generalist journals not interested in highlighting our works.

At present the Journal is still developing its personality. It publishes editorials, original articles, case reports, commentaries, and educational vignettes. These articles are submitted by authors from

Johns Hopkins Children's Center, 600 North Wolfe Street, CMSC 210, Baltimore, MD.

Address correspondence and reprint requests to Edward E. Lawson, MD, Division of Neonatology, Johns Hopkins Children's Center, 600 North Wolfe Street, CMSC 210, Baltimore, MD.

around the world, have been peer reviewed before publication, and provide important and relevant information to our profession. In the future, we will further strengthen the Journal by increasing the content of original articles with proven observations through use of appropriate scientific techniques. The topics may be of either clinical or basic science relevance to fetal and neonatal health. In addition to the classic disease oriented articles, we will encourage targeted epidemiological, preventive medicine, public health and social science topics. However, I expect that clinical observations relevant to the broad area of antenatal and neonatal disorders will predominate in the *Journal of Perinatology*, as these tend to have the strongest relevance to the majority of our readership. Case reports will be published when they contain original contributions to the principal topic of the report or when they contribute to the understanding of the pathophysiology of a disorder and they are well backed by citation to the relevant literature. We will attempt to have contemporaneous commentaries on important articles in the Journal and will retain interest in publishing new information regarding teaching and clinical practice issues. Opinion articles, including editorials and other commentaries, will be clearly identified as such and placed in their own sections of the Journal. However, the focus will evolve to that of proven new observations, particularly those with important healthcare implications.

Though the scientific articles published will reflect the interests and concerns of our multidisciplinary and international readership

we will also increase use of the *Journal of Perinatology* as a communication device for the Section of Perinatal Pediatrics. This may include dissemination of relevant policy statements by committees of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, as well as other news and debates from within other associated societies and sections. Since the Section on Perinatal Pediatrics also publishes a newsletter we will coordinate materials for publication in the appropriate formats. Finally, we will expand the electronic format to improve rapidity and dissemination of the Journal.

At present we are realigning the editorial board and the list of reviewers. I encourage those who care to actively participate in Journal activities to express their area of interest directly to me. In particular, critical reviewers are needed for the many articles submitted for consideration of publication. Individuals considering review articles or wishing to comment upon specific topics are encouraged to contact the Editor before submitting the manuscript.

The Journal has learned much from the past, has enjoyed success in the present and will further expand our goals and ideals for the future.

References

1. Testa J. The ISI[®] Database: The Journal Selection Process. <http://www.isinet.com/isi/hot/essays/199701>.