

EDITOR'S PAGE



What Is it Like to Be an Editor?



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What is it like to be an editor? I am often asked this question, or another one: “How much time does it take?” The implication is that it must be a burden, and if I say that it takes a great deal of time, I get a congratulatory look for being so unselfish with my time. The truth is, it does take a great deal of time from me, the team of associate editors, and all of those who review. But is it a burden?

Here in our cabin in Western North Carolina, I awoke several times last night wondering what to say to fill this small space in the journal. The Editor's Page is clearly the least significant part of any scientific journal. (This can be supported by surveys of the readership of journals.) Did I wake up so many times because of the challenge to say something profound or at least inspiring? Or was it because of hypoxia here at 5,000 feet elevation? The view is spectacular as the sun rises over Mt. Mitchell, the highest peak in the Eastern United States, and a family of deer munches on the plants that my wife so lovingly planted. Regardless of the reason for waking so many times, I could not find satisfactory inspiration for this page, so I have decided to tell you what it is like to be an editor. At least what it feels like to me.

It was a great honor when Dr. Eugene Braunwald and the committee asked me to take this job, and as the submissions grew, ultimately to 1,600 this year, the scope of this responsibility began to sink in. Dr. Tony DeMaria told me that it would be terrific. “You will get to see much of the research being carried out in the field before anyone else,” he said. That has been true, because I review all of the papers sent directly to *JACC: Cardiovascular Interventions* plus the interventional papers sent to *JACC*. The hard part is not the volume of submissions, but the fact that I find them all interesting. The quality of studies varies, of course, but the effort to pose questions and devise ways to answer them is always admirable.

So, the hardest part of the job is selecting which papers will be published in the journal. Without the help of the outstanding group of associate editors, this could not be accomplished. We would like to get reviews for all submissions, but the burden on reviewers would be too great. So, approximately one-third of the submissions considered by the editors are passed on without sending them on for review. Many of these will be published in quality journals, but for various reasons they are judged not to be of sufficient priority to likely be accepted to *JACC: Cardiovascular Interventions*. Many times, the reason is that the question being investigated is not novel and has already been dealt with adequately in the literature. Other times, the methods do not allow the conclusions that have been reached. For the papers that are reviewed externally, we try to select reviewers who are knowledgeable about the subject matter and do not have a known bias concerning the subject or the authors. We realize that completely eliminating bias is impossible, and we try to judge the reviews knowing that when we ask the opinion of reviewers, we do indeed get their opinions. In any case, deciding which 10% of submissions will get accepted is the hardest part of our job.

I have been asked by candidates for editorship of 2 subsequent subspecialty *JACC* journals what it is like to be editor-in-chief and how much time it takes. To get the answers from those who were selected for those jobs, you will have to ask them. One is chief of a division and must be a better delegator than I. Editors will find different ways to discharge their duties, but for me these last 8 years have not been a burden. To paraphrase The Hollies from the 1970s, “It ain't heavy, it's my journal” (1). Because I have given up much of my clinical responsibility, and my teaching and research activities are manageable, the journal occupies a prominent component of my time. I do, however, think remaining active in the field is crucial for any editor, and I am thankful for the opportunity

to participate with my younger colleagues as I always have.

I do not know how editors functioned prior to the internet age. Huge stacks of manuscripts could never be transported to my cabin in the mountains, but the speed of the internet here is the same as when I am at Emory University, and the view is much better. I suppose the decision making for those editors looking at paper manuscripts was the same as for us, but the freedom of movement is now unlimited. I have conducted the editors meetings from Paris, Cape Town, Sendai, Beijing, Seoul, and a cozy cabin in the

mountains. The job of editing a journal with associate editors and reviewers scattered around the world from 5,000 feet high in the Appalachians is not a challenge of communication anymore. As the snow begins to fall, the real challenge will be negotiating the drive down the hill in my non-4-wheel drive car. I need to trade up!

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REFERENCE

1. The Hollies. He ain't heavy, he's my brother. Hollies Sing Hollies. London: Abbey Road Studios, 1969.