Editorials

JABFP—Its Purpose

The primary purpose of this journal is to publish original papers pertaining to clinical investigations, case reports, review articles pertinent to the specialty of family practice, editorial comments, and book reviews. The articles published are intended to provide new and valuable information for reference by the entire medical community.

The journal also is intended to serve as an important forum for the specialty of family practice, to serve as a source of clinical information, and to serve as a medium for timely information concerning the activities of the American Board of Family Practice.

Consistent with its past history, the American Board of Family Practice (ABFP) took another innovative step when it decided to publish its own journal. To my knowledge, no other American board has independently sponsored its own journal. ABFP felt that there was a need for another quality peer-reviewed publication in our specialty. This decision was based on the observation that the number of Board-certified, residency-trained family physicians will continue to increase at a steady rate. Further, the Board sensed that an increasing number of colleagues will be actively engaged in scholarly investigations, and they will have need of peer-reviewed specialty journals in which to publish.

The most important characteristic of the journal, demanded by the Board, is that it must maintain high-quality standards. In order to achieve this, there exists an outstanding Editorial Board and an active and effective Advisory Board. In addition, the reviewers represent a very impressive cadre of some of the most highly respected clinicians in the world.

This journal, along with other similar journals, bears the responsibility to establish and maintain the quality of investigation and publication for the specialty. Journals can, by encouraging or discouraging investigators, impact heavily on the direction and quality of research in the discipline. Accumulated investigation shapes the discipline and defines its content over time.

The journals within a medical discipline also reflect the state of the art for that discipline to other disciplines as well as to society in general. Journals reflect the value systems within the discipline represented. It is the responsibility of journals to identify both the strengths and weaknesses of the discipline and to serve as a reliable communication device among professionals.

For the discipline of family medicine, it is especially important at this time to make important contributions to medical knowledge. The discipline has long been largely dependent for new information upon investigators in other disciplines. If our discipline is to survive and manifest its destiny in society, it must make important contributions. The journals that represent the discipline must effectively communicate those contributions to its own disciples as well as to the professions and society in general.

The editorial staff of this journal is sensitive to these responsibilities and accepts them soberly. The quality of performance remains to be judged. Our intent is to encourage quality investigations and professional writing. Our criticisms of manuscripts are sincerely intended to be constructive. It is inevitable that more manuscripts will be rejected than accepted. It is also recognized that the editors are not flawless in their judgments of quality and that some criticisms of manuscripts may be misinterpreted as being personal in nature. This also is probably inevitable but must be minimized.

Finally, we feel very fortunate to be able to utilize the vast experience and time-proven excellence of the publisher. The Massachusetts Medical Society has achieved levels of quality in medical publishing that are virtually unmatched in the world. The staff members of the publisher are truly professional in every sense. We sincerely hope this is the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship.

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ABFP—An Organization of "Firsts"

It is with pride, anxiety, and some trepidation that the American Board of Family Practice enters the world of publication. Since its inception, the American Board of Family Practice has been an organization of "firsts."

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