There Is Nothing So Stable as Change

In her first editorial in 2012, the then Editor-in-Chief Barbara Gilchrest wrote that she “was both exhilarated and intimidated to assume the editorship of the Journal of Investigative Dermatology” (Gilchrest, 2012). After decades of hands-on skin research and the perspective of serving the scientific community from a different angle, I cannot find better words to describe my emotions. It is with a strong sense of responsibility that I take on the position of Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Investigative Dermatology.


Heritage and transition
Marion Sulzberger in 1938 outlined his vision for the JID: “Such a Journal should contain contributions from, and material of interest to, the immunologist and allergist, the biochemist and the cancer specialist, the student of genetics, of pigment, of virus diseases, of bacteriology and mycology, of endocrinology, of metabolism, of excretion, of vascular physiology and pathology, of physical therapy and physics, and many others.” (Sulzberger, 1938).

This vision has been admirably upheld by Mark Udey, the outgoing JID Editor, and his editorial team and is very well reflected in the range of articles published in the JID on cutaneous biology and manifestations and pathomechanisms of skin diseases. The incoming editorial team is well prepared to continue both the tradition of the journal’s thematic diversity and its excellence. To quote Bob Dylan: “There is nothing so stable as change.” I am very pleased that Elizabeth Blalock, the Executive Managing Editor and a pillar of the journal for more than 20 years, will continue supporting the editorial team and that so many outstanding scientists have agreed to serve the journal and the skin research community as editors. From its beginning, the self-conception of the JID has been to serve the global research community. This aspiration is also reflected in the fact that it is the official journal for both the Society for Investigative Dermatology and the European Society for Dermatological Research. To highlight the bond between the JID and skin research and skin researchers worldwide, Kathleen Green (Northwestern University, Chicago, IL), Kenji Kabashima (Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan), and Thomas Schwarz (University of Kiel, Kiel, Germany) have agreed to take on the roles of Regional Deputy Editors representing North America, Asia Pacific, and Europe, respectively.

In pursuit of Marion Sulzberger’s vision at the launch of the JID, the scope of published articles has always included both laboratory-based and patient-centered research. In fact, articles on clinical and epidemiological research are among JID’s highest cited publications. The appointment of Joel Gelfand as Deputy Editor for clinical research and epidemiology pays tribute to this reality and acknowledges the importance of the increasing number of manuscripts on complex clinical and epidemiological studies submitted to our journal.

Infallible (?) editors
The Editorial Board is the backbone of every scientific journal and ensures that the peer review process runs objectively and efficiently. It might be obvious to readers and authors, but it is still worth pointing out that editors have dual obligations. On one hand, we are obliged to the scientific community and to the readership to publish novel and rigorous research. On the other hand, it is our duty to provide the best possible assistance to the authors who submit their work to the JID. In fact, I consider the authors our most important customers. All members of the Editorial Board, being researchers and authors themselves, are well aware of the endless hours it takes to complete experiments and clinical studies and how many more hours it takes to write up and interpret and discuss the results. As in the past, we will work hard to deliver objective and swift decisions on submitted manuscripts; we will strive to provide authors with in-depth and helpful feedback. Are editors infallible in our judgment? When I worked as a postdoctoral fellow at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, MD in the 80s, I was deeply impressed by a framed note in the office of the Laboratory Chief Robert Gallo. It was a 1980 letter from the editor of a highly renowned journal rejecting the manuscript on the identification of a human retrovirus, advising the authors “to not continue perpetuating the controversy about human retrovirus,” strongly implying that it was well known that human retroviruses do not exist (Gallo, 2002). The finding was subsequently published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 1980 (Poiesz et al., 1980) and was in fact the discovery of the first human retrovirus, human T-cell lymphotropic virus type 1, which causes adult T-cell leukemia and tropical spastic
paraparesis. Together with the Editorial Board, I will make every effort to ensure that we will never have to regret rejecting a manuscript that then turns out to be a major scientific breakthrough.

**EDITORIAL**

An ode to peer review
One of the most basic obligations but also the noblest duty of a scientific journal is to organize the peer review of submitted articles. As a matter of fact, the quality of peer review is a pivotal determinant of a journal’s quality. This can only be achieved with the help of objective and competent reviewers to evaluate the novelty, methodological accuracy, ethical principles, and judicious data interpretation of submitted manuscripts. The consequences of the breakdown of peer review were shown by an experiment in which fictitious, seriously flawed manuscripts were submitted to a range of journals. A considerable proportion of the probed journals accepted the manuscripts for publication without spotting their obvious faults (Bohannon, 2013). This outcome highlights that critical evaluation of submitted manuscripts is an indispensable requirement for responsible scientific publishing. Peer review is entirely dependent on the goodwill and co-operation of the reviewers, most of whom are active scientists themselves, cutting out precious time for reviewing manuscripts. They are the unsung heroes of scientific publishing, serving the scientific community without a prospect for remuneration or fame. I can only thank all the past reviewers, and I am most grateful to those who will help us in the future to maintain our quality standards.

Do we need to follow the impact factor race?
When choosing to submit a manuscript for publication, authors have to consider several questions: is my article of interest for the journal’s readership? What is the standing of the journal in my area of research? Will a publication in this journal further my academic career? Many of these considerations will coalesce in the journal metrics, most notably its impact factor (IF). This parameter is based on the calculation of the mean number of citations of articles published in a journal in the two preceding years. Despite the false syllogism that a manuscript accepted in a journal with a high IF must automatically be of high quality, its perceived simplicity for measuring scientific merit has made the IF a mainstay in the evaluation of academic achievements. As such, it directly impacts academic career prospects and allocation of resources. Although criticized by many, this parameter of rating scientific accomplishments is very likely to stay with us for many years to come. The JID’s IF showed a steady upward trend over the past 20 years and with 8.5 has reached an all-time high in 2020 under Mark Udey’s leadership. To leave no doubt, owing to the significance attributed to this parameter in many academic institutions, one of my goals for the next 5 years will be to further increase the IF of the JID. In many clinically-oriented journals, guidelines and consensus statements are among the most highly cited items. In contrast, the top contributors to JID’s IF are original articles on both basic and clinical research. Publishing original research is and will continue to be the centerpiece of the JID’s mission. We are looking forward to publishing your leading-edge research in the JID.

Thinking what nobody else has thought
Another ambition of my editorship will be to make our journal more interactive and even provocative. New technologies and new ideas are mutually influencing factors that drive scientific progress. The past decade has seen a tremendous increase in new technologies that rapidly have become everyday practice in many research laboratories. They range from high throughput measurement of biological molecules commonly referred to as Omics to mass cytometry (cytometry by time-of-flight), multiphoton microscopy, and many others. On the upside, these technical advances progressively produce extensive and complex datasets. On the downside, this sea of information has become difficult to navigate even with tools such as data mining and machine learning. How should this data surge be transformed into knowledge? Obviously, the important step is to translate data into new hypotheses and ideas to be validated or dismissed by experimentation. However, not all creative scientists have the means or infrastructure to substantiate their hypotheses. If not communicated to scientists possessing such means, precious time might be lost, and excellent ideas and hypotheses might end up in the dustbin. Our authors and readers comprise a wide array of experts, including clinicians as well as cell biologists, geneticists, immunologists, and scientists from many other areas. JID commentaries, letters to the editor, and perspective articles will be ideal forums to foster both the intellectual exchange and cooperation among contributing scientists. After all, an important mission of our journal has been and will be to share the most important commodity of scientific progress, that is, creative ideas on the basis of reasonable evidence. As the Hungarian Nobel Prize laureate Albert Szent-Györgyi put it, “Research is seeing what everybody else has seen and thinking what nobody else has thought.” Thinking what nobody else has thought sounds like an excellent motto for the next 5 years.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**
The author states no conflict of interest.

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