We Begin, We Continue, We Succeed, We Thrive

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The Diseases of the Colon & Rectum was launched by the Executive Council of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons (then the American Proctologic Society) in November 1957. The Treasurer at the time, Dr. Reichman, noted that the Society’s financial obligation to start the Journal might exceed $27,500 over the first several years, which included the cost of member’s subscriptions (which would be paid for by annual dues), the cost of the Editorial Office, and a potential $10,000 subsidy to the publisher if losses occurred. Citing potential income from favorable advertising and royalties, the Executive Council approved and the contract (initially with J.B. Lippincott) was signed. J.B. Lippincott was fortuitously Dr. Harry Bacon’s neighbor, which facilitated the association with the publisher. Two names were proposed, “Diseases of the Colon and Rectum” or “Surgery of the Colon and Rectum” and the former chosen because it was felt to be more inclusive and the publisher felt it would sell more copies.

WE BEGIN

Louis Buie, MD, Chair of the Department of Colon and Rectal Surgery at the Mayo Clinic, was chosen as the first editor (1957–1967), and, in the first issue of Diseases of the Colon & Rectum, an editorial succinctly noted “We Begin.” In the editorial, Dr. Buie noted, “within the pages of this journal will be collected authentic communications pertaining to diseases of the colon, rectum and anal canal...We submit that this journal will not only lighten the toil of the overburdened reader as he seeks information about diseases of the colon, but will also assure authors in this field of a commanding place in the forum with an audience this is preeminently interested in their presentations.”1 He was assisted in the editorial office by his secretary Mildred Truax whose descendants continued with the Journal and by an executive editor, Dr. Harry Bacon, in addition to other editorial board members and a DCR advisory board of well-known physicians and surgeons.

WE CONTINUE

At the 25th anniversary of Diseases of the Colon & Rectum, then editor Dr. John Hill (1967–1987) was impelled to write an update of “we begin” entitled “we continue,” in which he noted that “there was doubt in the minds of some that a journal representing a small specialty Society such as ours would last so long. With the help of our Society, our publisher, the members of our editorial board, and our faithful contributors from this country and most of the rest of the work, this journal has persisted and I’m sure most would agree has made steady...progress.”1

WE SUCCEED

Continuing the close association with the Journal and the Mayo Clinic, Dr. Robert Beart was appointed editor and served from 1987 to 1996. He expanded the editorial board, noting that it was truly a working board including practicing colon and rectal surgeons who reviewed up to 70 to 90 manuscripts a year and established term limits for the board (P. Oldenburg, personal communication, 2016). The longstanding contract with Lippincott was renegotiated and subsequently rebid, and Williams & Wilkins began publication of the Journal with the January 1991 issue. After years of paying to have the Journal published, the new contract included publishing at no cost to the Society; Dr. Beart felt that this was an important decision in the history of the society, and it has resulted in robust financial support for the organization that continues today. He was succeeded by Dr. Victor Fazio (1997–2006) who expanded the editorial board to include coeditors, added international editors, and established relationships with international colorectal surgery societies. The Journal successfully transitioned to another publisher in addition to electronic manuscript submission and evaluation in 2004, added the first online issue in 2004, and streaming video in 2005. Dr. Fazio aptly described being editor-in-chief of the Journal as a “labor of love.”

WE THRIVE

In 2007, Robert Madoff, M.D., succeeded Dr. Fazio as editor-in-chief with an overriding goal to continually

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improve the quality of *Diseases of the Colon & Rectum.*

Under his leadership and assisted by his coeditors, Dr. Don Buie and Dr. Tom Read, in addition to Managing Editor Patricia Oldenburg and Editorial Assistant Nancy Truax, *Diseases of the Colon & Rectum* has improved the scientific quality and the accessibility not only to subscribers, but also to all interested in colorectal disease.

Commencing with the 50th anniversary year in 2007, the Journal’s appearance was redesigned to make it more readable, including standardization of figures and charts, changes in the color palette of figures to improve readability and reproducibility, and a more logical framework for articles. The number of case reports was minimized and dynamic articles included not just video, but also were accompanied by a written article. Invited commentaries about articles of particular interest previously published at the end of an article were published as editorials to stimulate readers to further investigate the original contributions. A “For Debate” section was added, and the importance of adherence to widely accepted publication guidelines such as CONSORT (Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials) and PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis) was further emphasized.

In the past decade, the circulation (both individual subscriptions of both print and online and institutional subscriptions via the Ovid platform) of the Journal has dramatically increased with 3527 subscriptions in 2015. The Journal may be accessed in paper format in addition to a number of electronic platforms including the DCR app with 3294 downloads in 2015 and through the Journal Web site with 342,221 total page views in 2015. Our impact factor has significantly increased over the past decade from 2.442 in 2006 to 3.749 in 2014. In 2015, 828 manuscripts were submitted for publication, representing an acceptance rate of 27%. Monthly Podcasts of selected articles were added in 2014 in addition to a number of initiatives to improve our social media presence on Twitter and Facebook.

In his last editorial, Dr Madoff notes that “editing a surgical journal is a serious responsibility. The main task is to publish high quality and credible research with the goal of advancing the science in our field” and that “peer review publication remains the surest way forward in medical progress.” With his characteristic modesty and understatement, he has noted the contribution of his outstanding team of coeditors, editorial board, and managing editors as the Journal transitions to our new Editor-in-Chief, Dr Susan Galandiuk. However, we must (in my opinion) place the credit for the success of the Journal in the past decade with Dr Madoff. He has been an outstanding leader and brilliant editor-in-chief with a keen dedication to the specialty of colon and rectal surgery, relentless support and guidance to his editors, and an unswerving focus on quality. His joie de vivre, insightful comments, keen wit, Latin quotes, and references to literature are unique and irreplaceable.

On behalf of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons, we offer our sincere thanks and deep gratitude to Dr Robert Madoff for his tireless dedication and hard work as Editor-in-Chief of the *Diseases of the Colon & Rectum* to make the Journal the most valuable and relevant publication for colon and rectal surgeons.

REFERENCES