



Twenty Years at the Helm

As my 20-year anniversary as *JCP*'s Editor in Chief approached, I "waltzed down memory lane" with Dr. John Shelton, *JCP*'s publisher and by now a dear friend. We reminisced over conversations that led to my accepting this honor, including a memorable dinner with Thomas P. Hackett, M.D., then my chief at the Massachusetts General Hospital.

I fished out my editorial of July 1987, "Sail Into the Future," in which I introduced myself to *JCP*'s readers. My eyes fixed on the photograph above the words. I was so young 20 years ago! Who knew?

Living in New England back then, I chose a nautical metaphor, referring to the *Journal* as a "prominent vessel in the fleet of psychiatric journals." (John and his dad Irv, then the senior publisher, thought this was hokey but agreed to humor their new editor.)

In 1987, I wrote with enthusiastic anticipation of advances in neurobiology, which would be "harbingers of clinical breakthroughs." I was proud of our scientific base and promised that *JCP* would continue to focus on the needs of practicing clinicians.

In the flash of an eye, 20 years have passed. What's left of my hair is much grayer. I recently became a grandpa. I live in the desert. And all of our submissions and editing are done on-line. But the *Journal* has lived up to its promises of 2 decades past—and then some. We are now the most widely read peer-reviewed journal in psychiatry,* are ranked 7 in impact,† and receive top-line manuscripts from the world over.

And psychiatric science has similarly lived up to the heady optimism of the late 1980s. The last 2 decades have seen research in psychotherapy move alongside the burgeoning field of psychopharmacology and other biological interventions. Imaging technology continues to grow closer to clinical applicability. Genomics and proteomics promise greater elucidation, someday treatment, and ultimately prevention of brain diseases. I am optimistic about where our field will be 20 years from now.

At the same time, health care economics are even worse than they were 20 years past. The U.S. health care system is in need of a serious re-fit, but no one knows how this will come about, what it will look like, or when it will take place. The large percentage of our population who live without health insurance in any given year is a national shame and economic burden. To add insult to injury, coverage for psychiatric conditions is still separate and legally discriminated against.

There is a growing focus on ethics and proper boundaries between scientists, scholars, and physicians and funding sources—particularly those associated with industry. We have recently addressed these issues in our editorials and are evolving policies to maintain the highest standards.

As I write, task forces to revise the *DSM* are coming together. This is an exciting prospect, as few psychiatrists like our current nomenclature and nosology—although we do recognize its advantages (particularly in reliability) over earlier iterations. *DSM-V* will very likely see elements of dimensionality supplement if not replace the existing categorical diagnoses, and ultimately, biology will inform diagnosis in psychiatry.

This journal will grow and evolve as our field ripens and matures. It will always focus on the needs of the practitioner.

For me, editing *JCP* continues to be a labor of love. I cherish the role of translating science into clinical application. My love extends to the people who help bring *JCP* to life every month. Heather Hopkins, with whom I still work, was one of the early and critical staff members in Tucson. Today, the role of editorial assistant is ably played by Pat Adams. Marlene P. Freeman, M.D., became a Deputy Editor of the *Journal* several years ago and has brought a unique vantage and insights to continue our climb toward excellence. Marlene has brought to life our new Women's Mental Health section and a section for Early Career Psychiatrists that is soon to be launched. Together with John Shelton, Marlene helped to conceive of and create other new subspecialty sections—the child focus, ably edited by Melissa P. Delbello, M.D., and the dementia focus, in the capable hands of Eric M. Reiman, M.D.

Working with John's superb staff in Memphis makes the job of *JCP* editor a delight. I cannot think of any more professional and devoted to mission than the wonderful people John has recruited and kept over the time I have been Editor. While the size of Physicians Postgraduate Press has grown over the last 20 years, the level of excellence has never flagged.

Dr. Reiman looks forward to “a world without Alzheimer's.” I say amen to that and pray I will be cognitively intact 20 years from now. Whatever that future holds for me, I have no doubt it will be a bright one for *JCP*, the devoted clinicians who are its readers, and the field of psychiatry. To our wonderful readers, editorial board and staff, publishing staff, and fellow editors—along with our huge army of reviewers—I extend a hand of gratitude and best wishes as we all sail into the future.

Alan J. Gelenberg, M.D.
Editor in Chief

*Source: Focus Readership Study, December 2006. PERQ/HCI Research, Princeton, NJ

†Source: Journal Citation Reports, July 2006. Thomson Scientific, www.thomson.com/solutions/scientific