



HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE JSCM: This Journal's Journey

Carolann Murphy, PA
Managing Editor

Over the past 33 years, the *Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine* has evolved from a small society newsletter into a major international journal. Tracing the growth of the journal mirrors the maturation of the field of spinal cord medicine and the professional development of the clinicians and researchers who devote their careers to improving the lives of people with spinal cord injury. The advances in the field were made in many small steps by many professionals who labored in a field that often commanded little recognition from the medical and scientific community. Similarly, the journal advanced in small but steady increments through the dedication of early editors and contributors who saw the need for a forum that would foster collaborative efforts.

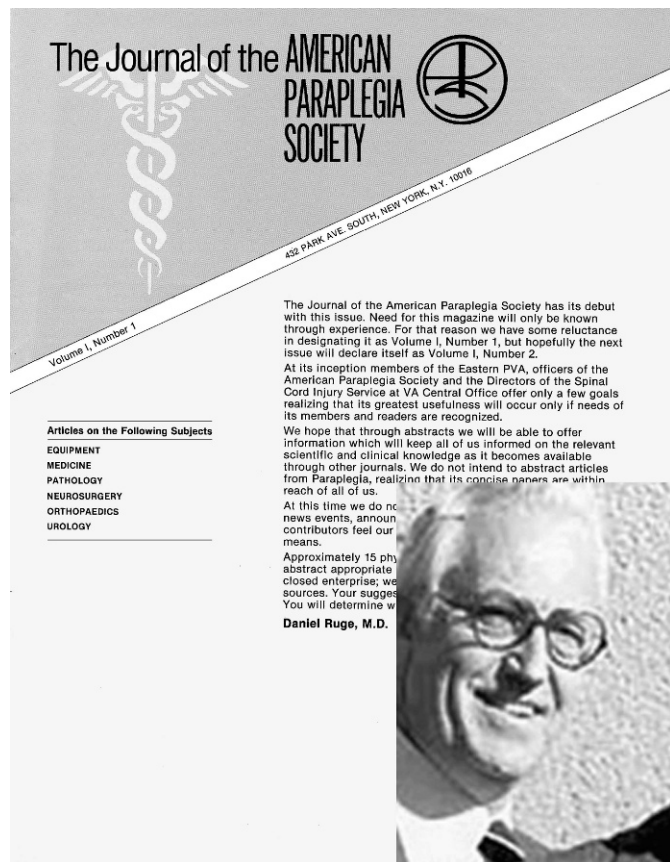


Figure 1. The first issue of The Journal of the American Paraplegia Society (1978). Daniel Ruge, MD, PhD, the first editor.

The pioneers in spinal cord medicine who founded the America Paraplegia Society (APS) had few vehicles for publishing articles and abstracts and no way to communicate with others working in the field. Thus, the society's journal was founded in 1977 with the support of Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association (now United Spinal Association) (1). Volume 1 number 1 appeared in 1978 (Figure 1a), as *The Journal of the American Paraplegia Society*, a title it would retain until 1995. The nascent journal's content comprised abstracts of SCI-related articles in the literature, professional news and meetings coverage.

In that historic first issue, basically an 8-page quarterly newsletter, the editor, neurosurgeon Daniel Ruge, MD, PhD, (Figure 1b) speculated, "Need for this magazine will only be known through experience. For that reason we have some reluctance in designating it as Volume 1, Number 1, but hopefully the next issue will declare itself as Volume 1, Number 2" (2). When the next issue did declare itself, Dr Ruge commented on the response to the journal's debut: "Volume 1, Number 1 is very attractive and worth the wait. It is certainly justification for Number 2.... Again we request that you seek outstanding material for this smallest big journal. Your spontaneous response is an example of the unique character of the SCI service. Let's keep it up!" (3).

And so they did.... The Journal continued to be nurtured collaboratively by APS members, mainly VA



Figure 2. Some of the early journal collaborators with Jim Peters (left), executive director of EPVA, at the 1984 APS meeting: Drs Inder Perakash, Ibrahim Eltorai, Erich Krueger, and Robert Hussey.



Figure 3. Catherine W. Britell, MD, editor, 1988–1992. The Journal of the American Paraplegia Society in 1990.

physicians caring for patients with SCI. Over the following 9 years, the duties of editor were rotated among Drs Ruge, Juan Fonseca, Sofjam Lamid, Inder Perakash, Ibrahim Eltorai, Rajendra Kumar Tiwari, Marilyn Wells, Warren Huber, Robert Hussey, Alain B. Rossier, Ahmed Z. alGhatit, Il Jung Lee, and Amico Bignami, among others (Figure 2). In 1983, a major milestone was attained when the Journal was accepted by *Index Medicus*, the biomedical bibliographic print database of

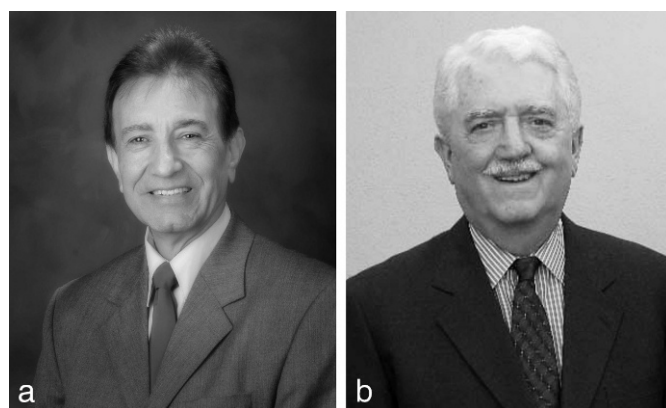


Figure 4. (a) N.D. Vaziri, MD, senior associate editor and interim editor. (b) Robert R. Young, M.D., editor from 1992 to 1999.

the National Library of Medicine that has evolved into today's electronic MEDLINE/PubMed (1).

In 1988, Catherine W. Britell, MD, professor of rehabilitation medicine at the University of Washington, assumed the post of editor-in-chief (Figure 3a). During her tenure, the Journal improved in quality, style and organization. In 1990, the design for volume 13 was totally revamped, with a new logo and colors on a white ground (Figure 3b). At this point, the Journal was featuring original research and editorials as well as abstracts and announcements, with issues of 60 pages. The Bors Award was instituted in honor of Ernest Bors, MD, which rewards the best research article published in the Journal by a young investigator (4). In 1992, longtime senior associate editor, nephrologist N. D. Vaziri, MD, (Figure 4a) served as interim editor until Robert R. Young, MD, assumed the editor's role, serving from 1992 to 1999 (Figure 4b).

During this period, peer review was formalized and the editorial board was expanded and organized by section editors and associate editors. The most significant change was made in January 1995 when the journal was renamed *The Journal of Spinal Cord Medicine* (Figure 5). Dr Young's editorial, "What's in a name?" explains that the rationale for the title change was "to stress the inclusivity and to define succinctly the broad field which



Figure 5. The current title adopted in 1995 during the tenure of Robert R. Young, MD.



Figure 6. The cover redesign in 2000 was accomplished during the term of Joel A. DeLisa, MD, MS, editor 1999–2005.

our journal tries to serve.... “By medicine,” he clarified, “we mean all aspects of medical science—medical and surgical specialties, rehabilitation, research, healthcare delivery... (5).”

From 1999 through 2005, the Journal continued to grow in stature and reach under the leadership of Joel A. DeLisa, MD, MS, chair of the department of physical medicine & rehabilitation at the University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey, who helped establish the subspecialty of SCI medicine (Figure 6a). In 2000, a redesign introduced a modern typeface and a cover featuring a spinal cord graphic (Figure 6b). To acknowledge the contributions of the spectrum of SCI professionals, the logo of the American Spinal Injury Association was incorporated on the masthead page. The Editorial Board grew to encompass spine surgeons, neuroscientists, rehabilitation engineers, therapists, and rehabilitation psychologists. Indexing was expanded to include EMBASE, the international biomedical database, CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature), and PubMed Central, the full-text archive of the National Library of Medicine.

In 2002, the now familiar *JSCM* logo was adopted (Figure 7), and in 2003, the Journal’s application was



Figure 7. The current *JSCM* logo was adopted in 2002. This special issue commemorated APS’s 50th anniversary in 2004.

accepted by Thomson Reuters Science Citation Index, paving the way for the Journal’s first impact factor in 2006 (6). Each year, the impact factor has risen, an important indicator of the Journal’s growing influence on clinical care and research (7,8). *JSCM* commemorated the APS’ 50th anniversary in 2004 with a special issue featuring invited reviews on a wide range of topics (Figure 7). The issue also featured the text of Gerard Kelly’s James J. Peters Memorial Lecture, the first in a series to honor the executive director of United Spinal Association, one of *JSCM*’s earliest and staunchest advocates (9).

When Dr DeLisa ended his successful tenure in 2005, APS selected Donald R. Bodner, MD, professor of urology at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, to succeed him (Figure 8). That year marked the launch of online submission and manuscript services via Editorial Manager, a significant step that streamlined the peer review process, more fully engaged board members, associate editors and reviewers, and encouraged the participation of authors from around the globe. Submissions increased by 33%, attracting authors from countries in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and South America.

After decades of generous support from EPVA, the Journal confronted new challenges as that organization

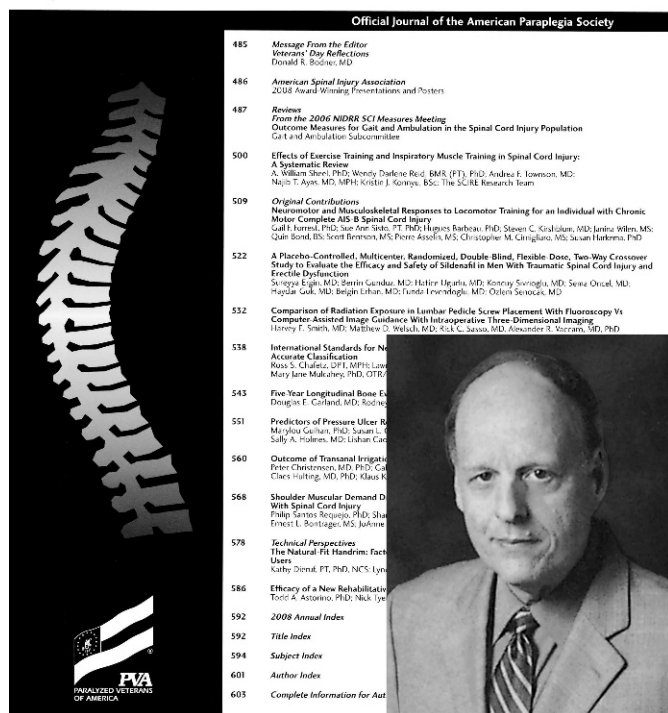


Figure 8. During Dr. Bodner's term as editor, JSCM acknowledges PVA support. Donald R. Bodner, MD, editor, 2005 – present.

formed a new independent nonprofit, United Spinal Association, with a greater emphasis on consumer advocacy. In 2007, JSCM, APS, and the 3 other professional associations (AASCIN, AASCIPSW, and TLC), gained the support of Paralyzed Veterans of America. JSCM's first issue of 2008 featured the PVA logo on the cover (Figure 8).

In 2009, these 4 professional associations united as the Academy of Spinal Cord Injury Professionals (ASCIP), and in 2010, adopted JSCM as its official journal. This issue is the first to carry the ASCIP logo (Figure 9). ASCIP comprises 4 Sections that represent the former professional societies, thus providing "an opportunity for the highest level of collaboration and growth, with each Section serving as a center for professional identity and mentoring," announced Terrie Price, PhD, ASCIP's first president (10). The Editorial Board will reflect the participation of all the disciplines of the Sections,

Many Minds. One Vision.

Figure 9. The official logo of the Academy of SCI Professionals.

ensuring the broadest breadth of content. Another major change is planned for later in 2010, when JSCM will transition to Thomas Land Publishers and incorporate the review content of *Topics in Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation*, further expanding its scope in the field.

As JSCM meets the challenges of its fourth decade, it is worthwhile to trace the development of this 'smallest big journal' as Dr Ruge called it in 1978. In many ways, this remains an apt description – JSCM is a small journal by many standards, but it has played a big role as a forum for clinicians and researchers seeking to improve the lives of people with SCI. With the tremendous activity in the field of spinal cord medicine, research and rehabilitation, JSCM's mission has broadened, but so has its support. Its' future promises to be even richer than its' past.

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