Standing down, being relieved

Transitioning to a new editorial team

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This editorial is my last as Editor-in-Chief: my 19 years as an editor with the green journal, and 10-year term as the Editor-in-Chief, ends on March 31, 2020. It has been an honor and privilege to serve our readers and authors. It has been fun, a lot of work, and a continuous learning curve. The goal has been to keep pace with standards in our field and in publishing, and thereby to provide high-quality biomedical journals for readers and authors, which will help improve our educational, clinical, and scientific missions as neurologists. I hope the majority reading this will agree that we have succeeded in many ways.

My initial editorial had in its title the word “mission,” and now I find myself wishing to borrow again from military parlance for this title. “Standing down” and the notion of “being relieved” are simple phrases that are nevertheless complex in nuance or meaning. Dr. José Merino stands ready to relieve me and take over this enterprise with his team, and will, I trust, do so in exemplary fashion.

Looking back, the mission I set for the journal has been largely successful. And yet, as with all human enterprises, there is fallibility. As a colleague once remarked to me, “I aim for perfection, but often have to settle for being human.” The *Neurology*® team has tried to do ever better (and here I am mindful of my institution’s motto, *Meliora*), and what more could be asked? We have had yearly retreats to ponder what needs attention, and how best to tackle problems; we have tried our best to respond to the concerns of authors, reviewers, and readers. We can be proud, looking back, at some achievements. When I took over as Editor, the green journal was singular, receiving around 4,000 manuscripts yearly. *Neurology* is now a family of 4 journals and 3 topical websites. Both web and print have undergone a complete redesign; our features have expanded; and there is now a wealth of digital content, including a highly successful podcast, infographics, and specialty sites. The hub journal alone now receives more than 5,400 submissions yearly. There is oversight for statistics, and for rigor and responsibility, especially in the areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Our enterprise has transformed into something different than it was a decade ago. The changes have been positive on balance, and the journals’ evolution will continue as we aim to increase diversity, improve editorial standards, and increase features that readers desire and find useful.

Any transformation represents the hard work of countless people, without whom none of this would have been possible, and all of whom deserve thanks. In acknowledging this, I run the risk of leaving someone out: but with that disclosure, I would be remiss if I did not try.

Our journal staff is outstanding: committed people, with creative ideas that have benefited our development. Week after week, we are able to process a large number of manuscripts and publish 48 great issues per year; authors are aided, and, we hope, readers are edified, by virtue of their work. Patty Baskin, our executive editor, and Kathy Pieper, our managing editor, have instructed us in best practices and kept performance at a peak; our efforts would be substantially poorer without them. We have been fortunate to have a strong group of staff over the years, some of whom “graduated” to be managing editors of our spin-off journals: Sharon Quimby, for *Clinical Practice*; Morgan Sorenson, for *Neuroimmunology and Neuroinflammation*; and Lee Ann

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Kleffman, for *Genetics*. Our current staff also includes Andrea Rahkola, Karen Skaja, Kaitlyn Aman Ramm, Kristen Swendsrud, Justin Daugherty, Madeleine Sendek, and Rachel A. Anderson. There have been others over the years, who have moved on to other ventures. All have contributed greatly, and for whom extravagant praise is barely enough, but I offer it nonetheless.

Our publishing partners at Wolters Kluwer, and in particular Kim Jansen, our publisher, field a large and talented team that take the finished manuscripts and figures and turn them into beautiful products, whether in paper or pixel. HighWire Press provides superb support for our online publishing. My kudos and thanks to them.

Our colleagues at the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) enrich our efforts daily. Angela Babb's team in communication, and especially Renee Tessman and her crew, who craft our press releases, keep us in the media mix, with billions (yes, billions) of media impressions yearly. They take our content and entice reporters to pick up those stories for the enjoyment and education of others. Jason Kopinski has been invaluable as the head of publications at the AAN—he has been in the forefront of contract negotiations, and has assured that we have the resources needed to continue to burnish our brand. He has been a sounding board for me, with consistently sound feedback and advice. The Board and officers of the AAN, and its Chief Executive Officer, Cathy Rydell (whose tenure ends nearly coincident with mine), have provided help and support; they, too, have been treasured colleagues. I will greatly miss working with such talented and wonderful people, whom I cannot thank enough.

To our reviewers, a hardy cadre of volunteers, I owe a special word of thanks, especially those who review often—the quality of any journal rests on the quality of its peer reviews, and as such you constitute a lynchpin of our efforts. My gratitude to each of you.

The journal would not be delivering high-quality content, week after week, without the tireless efforts of our editors and editorial board, past and present. To all of you: I have learned so much from your writing and from your feedback and I cannot praise or acknowledge your efforts enough. You all

know who they are—those on the masthead who help oversee all our efforts. To these friends, colleagues, advisors: thank you. A special callout to Dave Knopman and Brad Worrall, who have served as Deputy Editor—your friendship, help, and advice over the years has been treasured and invaluable. It has been a joy and great privilege to work with all of you on the editorial side and to see, from the inside, how your thoughts shape our field. Thank you for allowing me the privilege of leadership.

To our authors, the sine qua non of our efforts: thank you for entrusting us to provide solid reviews, for letting us know when we tripped up (we improve as a result), and for your efforts on behalf of neurology as a field. I hope our service to you has enhanced your efforts.

A final important thank you: to my family and friends, who have seen less of me than would have been the case otherwise, for support and encouragement over the years, because that support has allowed me to undertake this most fascinating and enriching path in my career. To those who have lived with me on this journey—Marsha, Jake & Marissa, and Dan—my love and thanks.

It is now time to step back and relax a bit; to read as whimsy strikes, listen to more music, travel, take up or resurrect some hobbies. To allow some spontaneity, to spend more time with friends and family. It is, and has been, an honor to serve; but it is more of an honor to have had one's service accepted. In this, I have been doubly fortunate: and so, I leave my post—standing down, relieved.

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