

# Efforts by the journal to promote perspectives of equity, diversity, and inclusion and address disparities

Patricia K. Baskin, MS, Kathleen M. Pieper, and Robert A. Gross, MD, PhD

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## Correspondence

Ms. Baskin  
pbaskin@neurology.org

In February this year, we erroneously published a humanities article that contained racial stereotypes. We retracted the article, expressed our deep regret,<sup>1,2</sup> and provided a series of proposed steps to address our processes and culture as related to diversity and inclusion.<sup>3</sup> We have continued to evaluate our editorial processes to ensure that American Academy of Neurology (AAN) values are represented in the Journal. This editorial is our promised update on the substantive and substantial changes we have made in our editorial processes and editorial team.

## The Humanities section

We suspended the Humanities section of the Journal immediately after the retraction took place and accepted the resignation of the editor of that section. We have heard from many that they find this section valuable, expressing a desire that we continue this feature. To do so, we will need to assure that processes and personnel are in place that will assure quality and responsibility. This section contains a variety of perspectives and topics, so we will proceed carefully to be sure all content represents the values of the Journal and the Academy. To accomplish this, we will seek the input of our new team of editors (described below), but also a group of persons with sound humanities/journalism credentials; the ultimate goal is to re-establish the section with new editors and sound editorial processes.

## New Diversity Associate Editors and diversity reviews of articles

We have recruited 2 Associate Editors (AEs) for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI): Roy H. Hamilton, MD, MS, FAAN, and Holly E. Hinson, MD, MCR, FAAN. Their role includes reviewing papers during the revision stages to assure they present appropriate perspectives when the authors describe particular groups and rationales for these studies, along with reviewing, from a diversity perspective, other commentaries, future Humanities articles, podcasts, and web materials. With their input, processes for reviews of papers have been put in place by Journal staff. In addition to reviewing papers, these AEs will be called upon to help create strategies to increase diversity on our Editorial Board so that the Board will better represent our authors and readers, an ongoing process that we recognize will be iterative (we evaluate Editorial Board needs on a yearly basis). We will consider hiring external consultants as needed to be sure we are following best practices.

## Establishment of a dedicated site on diversity topics

We have recruited a group of 3 editors, offering a variety of perspectives, to collaborate in creating and maintaining a dedicated online section of the Journal (referred to as a mini-site) to

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From American Academy of Neurology (P.K.B., K.M.P.), Minneapolis, MN; and University of Rochester Medical Center (R.A.G.), NY.

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highlight EDI content. Those who have agreed to serve include Jeffrey C. McClean II, MD, FAAN; Nicté I. Mejía, MD, MPH, FAAN; and Nicole Rosendale, MD. The site (NPub.org/edi) has been constructed and populated with links to articles published in *Neurology*<sup>®</sup> related to these topics, with initial postings by the editors. Our plan includes a new venture, still in the planning stages, that will appear on this site: “Voices”—first-person accounts of those in the neurology field about their lived experiences (NPub.org/voices).

## EDI awareness training

We have committed to ongoing awareness training of EDI issues for the Journal editorial team. At the Editorial Board meeting during the AAN annual meeting in Philadelphia in May, we devoted the discussion time to introducing the new EDI AEs and mini-site editors, elaborating on the changes in editorial processes that are taking place, and listening to questions and ideas from board members, who expressed solidarity with the new EDI initiatives and suggested new features to enhance the mini-site. The staff also participated in EDI training provided by the AAN during May and June to increase their awareness of these issues and increase their value as resources to authors, reviewers, and board members in this area. The EDI editors will conference with all AEs and staff to educate the group further on recognizing and being sensitive to themes related to EDI.

## Style changes

The editorial staff reviewed past Journal content to assess terms or phrases that may be considered inappropriate. In addition, a designated staff group was charged with reviewing authoritative style manuals and society and academic documentation to recommend changes to the internal Journal style guide. The resulting document was reviewed by the Journal and Publisher Production groups during the 2019 annual meeting. As a result, revisions were made to the style document that is used by editorial staff, production staff, and copyeditors.

## Ongoing diversity efforts

To move forward in a positive way, and to engender discussion, we published an invited Special Editorial by Hamilton et al.,<sup>4</sup> which responded to the retracted Humanities article

and articulated lessons for the future. We also solicited and published an article by Silver<sup>5</sup> on best practices for achieving gender equity. In addition, for the last year we have been collaborating with members of the AAN to generate data that we plan to publish in an upcoming issue of the Journal, examining gender distributions of officers, award winners, committee members, and Journal authors over the last 2 decades.

We will continue to work to earn your trust and confidence in our editorial processes. We are here to serve you and we strive ever to improve.

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## Disclosure

Patricia K. Baskin, MS, is Executive Editor of the *Neurology* journals and employed by the American Academy of Neurology. She has consulted with no stipend or reimbursements for the Medical Publishing Insights and Practices initiative. She has served as Editor-in-Chief of *Science Editor* and is Immediate Past President of the Council of Science Editors. Kathleen M. Pieper is Senior Managing Editor of *Neurology* and employed by the American Academy of Neurology. Robert A. Gross, MD, PhD, FAAN, is supported for educational endeavors from the University of Rochester Medical Center's Clinical and Translational Science Award from the NIH. Since his appointment as Editor-in-Chief in 2009, Dr. Gross ceased participation in industry-sponsored clinical trials and speakers' bureaus. He receives an honorarium from AAN as Editor-in-Chief of *Neurology*. Go to [Neurology.org/N](http://Neurology.org/N) for full disclosures.

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