

A Farewell Tribute to a Retiring Editor

Kendi Neff-Parvin, *WMJ* Managing Editor

The end of 2019 signals not just the end of a decade, it's also the end of an era. After 13 years at the helm of *WMJ*, John J. Frey, III, MD, has retired as editor—leaving behind a remarkable legacy.

"I've enjoyed the privilege of knowing John for several decades, going back to the years when we were colleagues at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, said Robert Golden, MD, dean of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) and vice chancellor for medical affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison. "When I think of John, two phrases come to mind: 'Triple Threat' and 'Renaissance Man' (please pardon the gender specificity of the latter). It is rare to find an academic superstar who is truly committed to patient care, research, and education...and excels in each. When you add to that special mix literary brilliance, the cohort becomes VERY small."

A family medicine physician and emeritus professor at SMPH, Dr Frey also served as chair of the Department of Family Medicine from 1993 to 2006. Throughout his career, he has been a prolific writer, editor, educator, speaker and mentor—something that has not gone unnoticed, as evidenced by accolades that include the American Academy of Family Physicians' prestigious John G. Walsh Award for Lifetime Contributions to Family Medicine in 2017 and the Wisconsin Medical Society's Directors Award—its highest honor—in 2015 for his contributions as *WMJ* editor.

"John is about as supportive a teacher and mentor as you can find. His focus is on his colleagues getting better but also becoming fulfilled in their roles as educators, physicians,



John J. Frey, III, MD

and scholars," said William Hueston, MD, a family medicine professor at the Medical College of Wisconsin and a member of the *WMJ* Editorial Board. "I remember when he was my department chair and I served as residency director in Eau Claire and rather than focus on how productive I was, he told me, 'You really should take some time off each week to do something meaningful to you, like gardening.' I'd never had a boss tell me to work less and enjoy life more, but that is how John connects to people. It's not about what they are doing, it's all about them as a person."

"That is going to be part of his legacy—this idea that medicine is bigger than just what happens in the hospital or the doctor's office, that there's a whole world out there and it's full of interactions that people have with patients or other clinicians, support staff, and the rest of the team. It's just bigger," said *WMJ* Interim Editor Sarina Schragger, MD, MS, who first met

Dr Frey when she joined the SMPH faculty in 1996. Eventually, he encouraged her to get involved with the *WMJ* Editorial Board and then invited her to serve as associate editor.

"John is the kind of mentor that you go into a meeting with and come out with lots of new ideas, excited about your plans, and you feel energized and enthusiastic. He is always able to see potential for new ideas, and instead of saying, 'that's impossible, we can't do that,' he'll say 'let's figure out how to make this happen,'" she said.

Dr Frey's career in medicine began at Northwestern University Medical School. He interned at Cook County Hospital in Chicago and completed a residency in family medicine at the University of Miami. He went on to teach at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and was residency director at U Mass before serving as assistant in general practice to Julian Tudor Hart in the National Health Service in South Wales, United Kingdom. Before settling in Madison, he taught at the University of North Carolina (UNC) Department of Family Medicine and was director of the Faculty Development Program and acting chair for 18 months, and worked in student, resident and community-based health education center programs.

While at UNC, Dr Frey met Valerie Gilchrist, MD, a colleague who later became his successor as chair of the SMPH Department of Family Medicine.

"What I would want people to know about John is his dedication to patients and the underserved," said Dr Gilchrist. "Not only is he a passionate social advocate in caring for patients, but John's gift—more than any other I can think of—is that he is the consummate storyteller. It

influences how he teaches, and it certainly influences his editorial responsibilities.”

Dr Frey has published numerous articles on a vast array of topics, including health care workforce issues and physician loneliness, graduate and undergraduate education, management of common clinical problems, and the social history of family medicine; and he is a frequent speaker at medical conferences across the country and internationally. He was recruited to the *WMJ* Editorial Board by previous editor Thomas Meyer, MD, and in 2006 agreed to serve as editor when Dr Meyer retired. He was also editor of *Family Medicine*, the official journal of the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine, for nine years and is currently associate editor of the *Annals of Family Medicine*, a bimonthly, peer-reviewed research journal jointly sponsored by the American Academy of Family Physicians and six other major family medicine organizations.

“John knows how to write well but, more importantly, as an editor, he helps others write better,” said Dr Hueston, who credits Dr Frey for positioning *WMJ* as “a healthy, thriving journal that serves the needs of practice doctors across the state.”

SMPH Professor Emeritus Patrick Remington, MD, MPH, agrees. “John is an exceptionally

gifted writer, and as an editor, he views his role as an opportunity to teach and mentor. You don’t get that often with editors,” Dr Remington said. “What he has brought to the journal is an

as long as the *WMJ* in the country,” he said. “The journal creates a forum for the profession. It’s its place to come together, where people can actually exchange ideas in ways that help

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exceedingly professional perspective and high standard of editorial oversight. He focused very much on the quality of the publication and took his role very seriously, putting a tremendous amount of time and effort into it—and it’s important to note that he did it as a volunteer. This was not a job for John, it was a passion.”

Dr Frey’s commitment to *WMJ* likely stems from his interest in history.

“I have kind of a reputation in my field as being a student of history, and there are very few continuously published medical journals

understand each other better. I believe that the *WMJ* has a really important place in the history of the profession, not just in the state, but in the country, and to be a part of that really means a lot to me.”

Dr Frey’s successor will be named in early 2020; until then, Dr Schragger will continue to serve as interim editor. Meanwhile, Dr Golden summarized the sentiments of many involved with *WMJ* over the past 13 years: “Thank you, John, for sharing all of these gifts during your long and loving stewardship of the *WMJ*.”

Medical Schools announce collaboration to publish *WMJ*

The Medical College of Wisconsin and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH) are pleased to announce the acquisition of *WMJ*, the peer-reviewed, indexed scientific journal that has been published by the Wisconsin Medical Society (Society) since 1903. The Society transferred ownership of the journal to the schools in August.

“As the Society looked to focus our efforts while continuing to offer members tools and resources to improve their personal and professional lives, we felt the journal could have broader impact through the medical schools while continuing to be a resource for the physicians of Wisconsin,” said Society CEO Bud Chumbley, MD, MBA.

WMJ operations will be overseen by a Publication Board comprised of representatives from each school, as well as an ex officio member from the Society. Publication Board members, the editor-in-chief, and the Editorial Board will be announced in early 2020.

“This collaboration offers an opportunity for each of our institutions to come together and advance some of our common scholarly goals: fostering professional communication, nurturing emerging research,

broadening the dissemination of public health science, and encouraging continuing education for medical and public health professionals,” said Joseph Kerschner, MD, dean of the School of Medicine and provost and executive vice president, Medical College of Wisconsin.

WMJ is available online at wmjonline.org and through the National Library of Medicine at PubMed.gov. In 2020, papers will be published online ahead of print each month, with quarterly print issues in March, June, September, and December.

“We are excited to bring *WMJ* forward into its second century of publication. In supporting this peer-reviewed journal, our aim is to provide a forum for thought leadership and an outlet for our faculty, residents, and students that showcases high quality “home grown” research and discussion of the most pressing health issues in Wisconsin and beyond,” said Robert N. Golden, MD, dean of the School of Medicine and Public Health and vice chancellor for medical affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

For information about submitting a manuscript or serving as a reviewer, visit wmjonline.org or email wmj@med.wisc.edu.

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WMJ (ISSN 1098-1861) is published through a collaboration between The Medical College of Wisconsin and The University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. The mission of *WMJ* is to provide an opportunity to publish original research, case reports, review articles, and essays about current medical and public health issues.

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