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Reflecting on Excellence: The *Wisconsin Medical Journal's* Year in Review

Fahad Aziz, MD, FASN; *WMJ* Editor-in-Chief

Since its beginning in 1903, the *Wisconsin Medical Journal (WMJ)* has been a vital platform for the Midwest's medical community. This peer-reviewed, indexed journal has a long history of publishing significant scientific works, focusing on educating health care professionals and promoting scientific research. Initially published by the Wisconsin Medical Society (Wismed), ownership shifted in 2019 to the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH). A publishing board, with members from each institution and a representative from Wismed, now oversees *WMJ* operations.

I started my journey as editor-in-chief one and a half years ago with the expert guidance of esteemed Publishing Board members Jonathan Temte, MD, Elizabeth Petty, MD, and Robyn Perrin, PhD, from the SMPH and Asirani Chiu, MD, Amalia Lyons, MD, and Sara Wilkins, MA, MPA, from the MCW. Their collective wisdom and support were instrumental in my transition into this role. Additionally, the opportunity to collaborate closely with Kendi Neff-Parvin, our highly skilled managing editor, and

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Robert Treat, PhD, our insightful deputy editor, has been a privilege and a profound learning experience. Their guidance and support have contributed significantly to my professional development and comprehension of the publishing process.

The mission of the *WMJ* goes beyond just

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sharing groundbreaking research in all areas of medicine. Our goal is also to nurture and improve the abilities of medical students and emerging medical professionals, empowering them to use their expertise beyond the confines of any single institution. In this editorial, our goal is to shine a spotlight on the progress made by our journal in 2023 and lay out our ambitious goals for 2024. We strive to encourage advancements in the medical field by fostering a community that shares knowledge and promotes professional growth.

REFLECTING ON PROGRESS: 2023 ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES

Publications

Last year marked a pivotal period of growth

and achievement for *WMJ* as we experienced unprecedented manuscript submissions. These submissions span diverse categories, including original research, comprehensive reviews, detailed case reports, and insightful commentaries. We received 161 submissions, surpassing all previous years. Our publication efforts

matched this vigor, with 100 manuscripts successfully published.

In response to the rising number of submissions, we strategically decided to increase our publication frequency, expanding from four to six issues per year, with the latter two combining to form a special issue. This expansion has proven highly effective in accommodating the breadth of contributions we receive and allowing us to showcase a wide array of vital medical research and insights.

Moreover, 2023 saw us embark on a significant transformation, shifting the journal from its traditional printed format to a fully online platform. This transition modernizes our distribution method and aligns with our commitment to environmental stewardship. By going digital, we

have taken a considerable step towards minimizing our paper consumption and actively supporting the mission of a greener environment.

Publication of Special Issue

In December 2023, the *WMJ* significantly contributed to the collective understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic by publishing a special double issue. This landmark edition compiled the expertise and experiences of more than 120 health professionals, researchers, students, and artists from Wisconsin, all reflecting on the myriad challenges and learnings from the pandemic. The issue delves into various critical themes, including the evolution of patient care, the profound impact on health care workers, the strategic public health responses, and the disparities and inequities highlighted or exacerbated by COVID-19. Each manuscript contributed to a broader narrative of resilience, adaptation, and the ongoing quest for knowledge in the face of a global health crisis.

Editorial Fellowships

The *WMJ* took a significant stride forward in 2023 with the launch of its editorial fellowship program, a visionary initiative designed to equip the next wave of medical professionals with the tools necessary to advance medical knowledge and continue the journal's legacy. We developed this program specifically to foster and enhance the skills needed to lead in the distribution and management of medical literature, thus shaping the future leaders of the *WMJ* mission.

We proudly welcomed four accomplished editorial fellows, each bringing a wealth of medical expertise and unique perspectives to the journal. Our inaugural group of fellows consists of Saswati Bhattacharya, PhD, a scientist in the Department of Pediatrics at SMPH; David Mallinson, PhD, a post-doctoral fellow in the SMPH Department of Family Medicine and Community Health; Corlin Jewell, MD, assistant professor of emergency medicine at SMPH; and Eduard Matkovic, MD, assistant professor of pathology and laboratory Medicine at SMPH. The collective efforts of these fellows have already resulted in substantial contributions towards the progression of the *WMJ*'s goals and objectives.

Looking ahead, we eagerly anticipate recruit-

ing the second cohort of editorial fellows in the fall of 2024, following the successful completion of the current fellows' tenure. This ongoing cycle of fellowship and mentorship is integral to our commitment to fostering editorial excellence and ensuring that *WMJ* remains at the forefront of medical scholarship and communication.

2024 OUTLOOK

In 2024, we reaffirm our commitment to maintaining the publication cadence of six issues annually, including a special themed issue in December. This issue will serve as a platform for novel research, comprehensive reviews, and thought leadership on the myriad topics around maternal and child health, providing our readership with in-depth analysis and discussion on relevant and emergent topics. Submissions are due July 15, and we are currently putting together an advisory board to help inform the content of this issue. Learn more by visiting wmjonline.org/featured-content/call-for-papers-mch/.

Seeking Editorial Talent

In response to the surge in submissions and the corresponding increase in publication volume, the *WMJ* is actively seeking to expand its editorial team by recruiting additional deputy editors. This strategic move is designed to enhance our journal's operational efficiency, notably by reducing the time required to process manuscripts editorially. This expansion will also allow new professionals to gain firsthand experience with the nuances of editorial processing, thereby nurturing the next generation of editors within the field.

Simultaneously, *WMJ* is looking to augment the composition of its esteemed editorial board. This diverse and dynamic group of physicians, researchers, and other allied health professionals is instrumental in shaping the journal's policies and guiding its direction. As some of our board members approach the conclusion of their tenure, we are keen to invite new members who represent a broad spectrum of medical specialties and can contribute to realizing the journal's vision and mission.

In addition, the crucial work of peer reviewers cannot be overstated, as they are central to the progression of scientific knowledge. In light

of this, *WMJ* is also seeking additional reviewers. Expanding our reviewer pool will enable us to improve our manuscript review turnaround times, thereby enhancing the overall editorial and review process. We seek individuals committed to upholding the high standards of our journal and contributing to the advancement of medical science. Sign up to become a reviewer at wmjonline.org/for-reviewers/wmj-reviewer-sign-up-form/ or email wmj@med.wisc.edu.

Finally, on behalf of our editorial team, I wish to express our heartfelt appreciation for the enduring support and dedication of SMPH Dean Robert N. Golden, MD, and MCW Joseph E. Kerschner, MD, the publishing board, editorial board, esteemed authors, meticulous reviewers, and valued readers. Their collective commitment and relentless pursuit of excellence are the cornerstone of the journal's high standards, ensuring the quality and integrity of its published content and enhancing its esteemed reputation.

Together, these joint endeavors have yielded publications that are not just informative but influential. Through shared knowledge and rigorous peer review, we have created a platform that makes a significant and lasting impact on the medical community. We are immensely grateful for this community's contributions, which underpin the journal's success and enable us to continue advancing the field of medicine.

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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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