



Fahad Aziz, MD, FASN

A Season of Gratitude: Honoring the Community That Sustains Us

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

‘G’ratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.” — *Cicero*

Every year, the holiday season gives us a chance to pause. To breathe. To remember what truly matters. In the middle of our deadlines, clinics, call schedules, meetings, and the steady flow of manuscripts, this time of year gently nudges us to look up from the day-to-day work and acknowledge the people who make all this possible. Gratitude has a way of settling us. It reminds us why we do this work in the first place.

For the *Wisconsin Medical Journal (WMJ)*, this moment of reflection carries special meaning. The past several years have brought tremendous change—more than any of us could have imagined when we first began this journey. Our submissions have grown by more than 100%, and the reach of the journal has expanded far beyond the Wisconsin’s borders. That kind of growth doesn’t happen on its own. It happens because people believe in the mission of this journal and choose to invest their time, their work, and their trust.

Together, we have produced special issues

that captured important moments and needs in our community—from lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to maternal and child health. And now we are preparing for an issue on medical education, a topic that feels espe-

cially timely and meaningful for Wisconsin’s medical community. Today, that torch is carried forward by Dean Nita Ahuja, MD (UW School of Medicine and Public Health) and Dean Deborah Costakos, MD (MCW), whose guidance, encouragement, and belief in the

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When I look at these milestones, I see more than numbers or completed projects. I see the collaboration, conversations, and collective effort behind them. The growth of *WMJ* reflects something deeper: a shared belief that scholarship matters, that local voices deserve a platform, and that through this work we can improve the health of the people we serve.

WMJ’s progress has been possible because of the steady support of our academic institutions. We remain deeply grateful to both the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and the Medical College of Wisconsin. This partnership began with the visionary leadership of Dean Robert Golden, MD, Dean Joseph Kerschner, MD, and MCW President John Raymond, MD, who understood that a statewide journal thrives only when the

journal’s mission have allowed *WMJ* to continue growing. Their support is not just organizational—it is personal, steady, and deeply appreciated.

Our Publishing Board remains one of our greatest strengths. Jonathan Temte, MD, PhD, Elizabeth Petty, MD, and Robyn Perrin, PhD, from the School of Medicine and Public Health; Asriani Chiu, MD, Andrew Petroll, MD, MS, and Sara Wilkins, MA, MPA, from MCW; and Abdul Khan, MD, representing the Medical Society of Wisconsin, have been the quiet architects behind our policies, processes, and strategic direction. They bring wisdom, steadiness, and a profound commitment to elevating the journal. Their influence is woven into every issue we publish.

We are fortunate as well to be guided by an exceptional Editorial Board—leaders from our medical schools and health systems across

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Wisconsin. In a world where information moves quickly and attention is scarce, their expertise helps ensure that *WMJ* remains relevant, rigorous, and resilient.

The journal is also stronger because of our partnership with the team at Ebling Library. From indexing to confirming each manuscript's references prior to publication and providing guidance on myriad issues in the world of academic publishing, their contributions are immeasurable.

This past year has marked transitions that speak to the strength of our editorial community. Robert Treat, PhD, our former deputy editor, provided six years of service that helped modernize our processes and strengthen the journal's foundation. Now, Sanjay Bhandari, MD, and Shanthi Narla, MD, our newly appointed deputy editors, bring a renewed energy and vision that is already expanding what *WMJ* can be.

Our current editorial fellows—Victoria Ronin, MD, Raul Rodriguez, MD, Apurva Popat, MD, and Jiajie Yan, PhD—represent the promise of the future. Their curiosity, creativity, and commitment have brought a fresh vibrancy to *WMJ*. They are learning from us, but we are also learning from them.

To our authors—you are the heart and soul of this journal. Every manuscript you send represents hours of effort, reflection, and the courage to share your work with the world. You turn observations from clinics, labs, classrooms, and communities into knowledge that can change practice and improve lives. You are the storytellers of science, the ones who give meaning to data and help us better understand the world around us.

We know you have many choices about where to submit your work, and it is never a small decision. When you choose *WMJ*, you place your trust in us—trust that your research will be handled with care, evaluated with fairness, and shared with the audiences who need it most. For that trust, we are profoundly grateful. Your discoveries, your questions, and your insights are what bring these pages to life. You give this journal its purpose.

And to our reviewers: your generosity is the steady heartbeat that keeps this journal strong. Much of what you do is invisible to the

broader community, but we see it—the late-night reviews, the thoughtful comments, the careful attention to accuracy and clarity. You give not because you must, but because you care deeply about the quality of scholarship in our state. You believe in lifting others up, in strengthening their work, and in upholding the standards that make *WMJ* worthy of the trust our readers place in it.

Your dedication ensures that each article is clearer, stronger, and more meaningful than when it first arrived. You shape the integrity of this journal in ways that can't be quantified but are felt in every issue we publish. For your time, your expertise, and your unwavering commitment, we are truly thankful.

Finally, no expression of gratitude would be complete without recognizing Kendi Neff-Parvin, our remarkable managing editor. So much of what she does happens quietly, without spotlight or recognition, yet every issue of this journal carries her fingerprints. Her calm leadership, her ability to navigate challenges with grace, and her unwavering dedication—even on the days when deadlines collide and the unexpected happens—are what keep *WMJ* moving forward. She is the person who holds the threads together, who makes sure the work gets done, and who cares deeply about the quality and integrity of every page we publish. The truth is simple: this journal is possible because of her, and I am profoundly grateful for all she brings to *WMJ*.

And to our readers across Wisconsin and beyond—we are deeply grateful for you. Everything we do, every issue we assemble, every article we refine, is ultimately for the people who open these pages with curiosity and purpose. You are the reason this journal exists. Whether you read *WMJ* to stay informed, to challenge your thinking, to learn from colleagues across the state, or simply to stay connected to Wisconsin's medical community, your engagement gives this work meaning. Your continued interest reminds us that the impact of this journal extends further than we ever imagined. We know how busy your days are—patients to see, notes to finish, families to care for, research to pursue—and yet you still make time to read, to reflect, and to grow. Your trust in the journal sustains us; your feed-

back sharpens us; and your presence reminds us that our efforts matter. When we think about why we do this work, we think of you—our readers who carry the knowledge forward into clinics, classrooms, laboratories, and communities. For all of that, we are sincerely and profoundly thankful.

During this holiday season, my hope is that each of us can find a quiet moment—somewhere between the deadlines, the patients, the travel, and the celebrations—to truly feel the warmth of gratitude. We move fast in medicine; we rarely stop long enough to take in the good that surrounds us. But when I look at this journal, at the people who pour their time and heart into it, I am reminded that *WMJ* is far more than pages and publications. It is a community. A family of clinicians, scientists, educators, and learners who share a belief that knowledge—honestly created and generously shared—can make a difference.

Thank you for being part of that family, for lifting this journal forward, and for reminding us of what is possible when people choose to work together with purpose.

Wishing you peace, joy, and a season filled with gratitude—and the grace to pause long enough to feel it.

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