Transitions

This is the last issue of Health Education Research: Theory & Practice in which I will be serving as the US Executive Editor. It is with very mixed feelings that I will be stepping down from the position.

When I assumed the editorship in 1992 from the very capable hands of Dr Kenneth Beck, I inherited a relatively young journal that had already developed a strong reputation in the field. During the past 4 years the journal has continued to develop a reputation for publishing high quality articles that strengthen the links between theory and practice in health education and health promotion. Moreover, the journal has strengthened its reputation for publishing articles on the cutting edge of the field. For example, recent theme issues have focused on qualitative research methods, community coalitions and measurement in health education. While maintaining our emphasis on high quality articles that use educational strategies to improve the health of populations, an increasing number of articles have focused on system change strategies to create more supportive social environments, such as having families, social networks, organizations, communities, public policy or culture as the target of change.

Impact measures are one way of assessing the effect of a journal on a discipline. Currently, the journal is ranked 15th in impact factor in public health (0.716), just below the American Journal of Community Psychology (0.780), Public Health Reports (0.787) and Social Science and Medicine (1.033). In the ranking of public health journals, Health Education Research: Theory & Practice is second only to Health Education Quarterly (1.097) among health education journals and has a higher impact rating than the Journal of School Health (0.705). The journal is also ranked 16th in impact factor in education and educational research. This suggests that for a journal that is only a little over 10 years old, it has had a greater impact on the field than one would have expected, particularly in health education.

Editors have relatively little effect on the success of a journal. Rather, success is due to a combination of factors, particularly the authors who submit their articles, the anonymous reviewers who dedicate their time and effort to assuring that articles that are published are of the highest quality, the Editorial Board that sets the direction of the journal and devote their time and effort to reviewing manuscripts and providing feedback to editors, and Associate Editors who carry much, if not most, of the work load. While I cannot personally thank all of the authors who submitted manuscripts to the journal’s peer review process, I would like to single out a few individuals who contributed substantially to the current standing of Health Education Research: Theory & Practice.

One of the wonderful benefits of serving as editor of a journal is the opportunity to meet and work with individuals whom one would not normally meet. One such individual is Dr Keith Tones, Executive Editor for Europe, who has been with the journal since its inception. I have had many stimulating conversations with Keith about health education and differences between Europe and the US, and I want to thank him for his patience, tolerance and delightful sense of humor. As with all of the individuals involved with the journal, he has a strong commitment to the field and developing and maintaining the quality of Health Education Research: Theory & Practice.

I would not have taken the position of Executive Editor without the support of Allan Steckler as Associate Editor. Allan has been a colleague, friend and mentor for almost 20 years. Allan has always been willing to go the extra mile, and my cherished memories include long conversations with Allan in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, developing the ideas included in our editorials. He, along with Keith Tones, taught me that editors have responsibilities not only to the journal, but to our authors and the profession. The purpose of an editor is not simply to serve as a manager and referee, but to assist authors in preparing manuscripts that meet the highest standards of quality, and that identify and address issues important to the field.

Brenda DeVellis, Associate Editor for book reviews, has done an outstanding job developing...
Editorial

the book review section of the journal. Frequently a thankless task, book reviews provide an important service to our readers. Despite the many demands on her time, she has developed clear guidelines and worked with reviewers to produce reviews that inform and allow our readers to assess the quality of the volumes.

Oxford University Press (OUP) is a wonderful organization with which to work. Throughout my tenure as Executive Editor, OUP has allowed complete editorial control while providing exemplary production support. The journal has been fortunate to have had managing editors, including Amanda Horsfall and more recently Jackie Fox, with strong commitments to the journal and a willingness to be of assistance whenever needed. Sue Bell, who has served as OUP Production Editor, deserves a medal and a raise for keeping us on track and on schedule. Finally, Erich Staib has provided invaluable assistance in marketing the journal in the US.

While the decision to step down as Executive Editor was difficult, I found that I could no longer keep up with the duties and responsibilities of Executive Editor. The increasing number of high quality manuscripts submitted, along with a new position as Chair of a department, had increased the lag time on reviews beyond acceptable levels. However, we have been fortunate to have recruited a new Executive Editor who will assure that Health Education Research: Theory & Practice remains one of the leading journals in the field.

Dr James Sorenson, who had been Chair of the Department of Health Behavior and Health Education (HB&HE) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for a number of years, has agreed to assume the position of Executive Editor of Health Education Research: Theory & Practice effective September 1, 1996. Dr Sorenson will be establishing an office with sufficient staff support to assure timely turn around on manuscripts submitted. With his 15 year history of serving as Chair of departments of health behavior and health education, Dr Sorenson will be able to provide the leadership required by the journal, our authors, our readership and the field.

Kenneth R. McLeroy
Department of Health Promotion Sciences
College of Public Health
University of Oklahoma
PO Box 26901
Oklahoma City, OK 73190, USA