EDITORIAL

Eighteen months and 100 manuscripts later

Eighteen months have passed since the Americas' editorial office of HER moved to Chapel Hill. This has been a period of excitement and challenge for us. We would like to reflect on our experience during this period and make some observations about the manuscripts received as well as provide some suggestions to prospective authors.

We want to thank the many authors in the Americas who submitted manuscripts to HER during this time, as well as the more than 150 reviewers who provided countless hours reading manuscripts and making suggestions to authors. We appreciate the authors' trust that their manuscripts would receive a fair, timely and informative review. We also appreciate the fact that our many reviewers delivered just this.

Our referee database contains more than 225 professionals from throughout the US and Canada. About 90% are doctorally trained and 76% work in a university setting. Eleven percent work in practice settings, while 7% hold government positions and 5% are employed in research institutions. The areas of expertise most frequently indicated by our reviewers are community-based interventions, evaluation research, community health and adolescent health. The least common areas of expertise are rural health, men's health and physical therapy.

We appreciate how hard our reviewers work to conduct excellent reviews. About 90% of reviews were completed and returned to us on time. One surprise for us has been how rapidly we work through our list of reviewers. We attempt to ask reviewers for no more than two or three reviews a year. However, with usually three reviewers per manuscript we sometimes have to go back to them more often than we would like.

All manuscripts received in Chapel Hill undergo an initial review by the editorial staff to determine their appropriateness to HER. By appropriateness we mean that the topic or focus of the manuscript is of major interest to the field, in our judgment. Speaking only for manuscripts submitted in the Americas the past 18 months, we viewed two-thirds as appropriate for HER and sent them out for peer review. We judged one-third of the manuscripts as not appropriate for HER and returned them to the authors, often with a suggestion for a more appropriate journal.

Common reasons for inappropriateness include: (1) a topic that is specialized to the extent that it is not of interest to our general readership; (2) research with a selected or undefined sample with very limited or unknown generalizability; (3) findings based on a limited pilot project or highly focused formative research that presents no set of findings of general interest; and/or (4) a work repeats what is already in the literature.

All this said, the majority of authors made an appropriate decision in submitting their work to HER. For prospective authors who are unsure if their work is appropriate, we ask that you consider the following two questions: (1) is the work on a topic of general interest to the profession (and if so, what is that general interest); and (2) does the work add to the existing scientific and/or practice knowledge bases of health education (and if so, in what important ways)? If the answers to these questions are yes, HER is interested in the manuscript.

Of the manuscripts that received peer review, approximately one-third eventually were accepted, usually after one or more revisions. Two-thirds were rejected, usually after one review cycle. Based on the comments of our reviewers as well as our review of the manuscripts, there are multiple reasons for rejection. The most common ones include: (1) a serious flaw in the design, measurement features and/or data analysis of a research project; (2) significant misuse or misunderstanding of a theory or set of theoretical constructs and their inappropriate use; (3) review or critique of a research or topic that is significantly incomplete and/or seriously flawed in its conceptualization; and/or (4) the authors prepare the paper as a main theme article, when in fact it would be more appropriate as a 'program', 'short communication' or 'point of view article'. When the latter occurs,
we usually recommend that the author revise and resubmit the manuscript in a more appropriate format, assuming it is on a topic of general interest.

As in the past, the journal publishes four basic types of manuscripts. Main theme articles are data-based research or theoretical articles with an upper limit of 6000 words. These articles must be of wide professional interest, reflect the state of the literature and/or research, and make a significant contribution to the field. To accomplish this, research articles must have sound methods and appropriate statistical analyses. Program articles, limited to 4000 words, describe health education and health promotion programs. The program description and analysis must advance the state-of-the-art of health education practice at the individual, organizational, community and/or policy level. Short communications, up to 2000 words, provide brief reports of original data, research methodologies or interventions that are innovative or of exceptional timeliness and do not require full-length treatment. Point of view articles, limited to 2000 words, are meant to generate debate and discussion, or draw the attention of our readership to a topic of importance in health education research, theory or practice. Preparation of manuscripts that follow these guidelines would greatly facilitate the review process and increase chances of review.

As we begin this 13th volume of HER, we would like to thank six members of the America's Editorial Board who have completed their terms. They are Jim Burdine, Noreen Clark, Neil Gottlieb, Cynthia Jorgensen, Linda Goldenhar and Barbara Rimer. In addition to reviewing manuscripts, they provided wise council and suggestions to the editors and Oxford University Press on how to develop and improve this journal. We would also like to thank Brenda DeVellis who has completed her term as Book Review Associate Editor. The quality and quantity of excellent reviews over the past several years reflect on her hard work and commitment to this important journal component.

At the same time we would like to welcome seven new members to the America's Editorial Board. They are John Allegrante, Andrea Carlson Gielen, Larry Green, Amelie Ramirez, Todd Rogers, Majorie Speers and Marc Zimmerman. These new Board members bring the vision, experience and commitment to health education and health behavior research theory and practice that will ensure continued growth and excellence of this journal.

We are excited to report that HER has embraced the information technology revolution. During the coming year HER will offer full-text articles over the World Wide Web to journal subscribers. In the future, we anticipate considering on-line interactive articles, or 'HTMLuscripts', that will take full advantage of the interactivity of this new communication medium. In addition, the America's editorial office will experiment with handling the entire manuscript submission process electronically with a few selected manuscripts this coming year.

The journal is growing in both circulation and importance to the field around the world. Oxford University Press has instituted a new student rate for journal subscription and has also made a special subscription rate available for members of the Public Health Education and Health Promotion Section of the APHA. We look forward to working with all the journal's constituencies to make the journal an even more powerful force, not only for our profession, but also for achieving our ultimate objective—improving the health of the public. To work toward this objective requires a continuing flow of quality manuscripts. Our experience over the past year and a half suggests that HER continues to receive many such manuscripts. Hopefully the suggestions provided above will assist potential authors in considering publishing their important work in HER.

James R. Sorenson
Executive Editor
Allan Steckler
Associate Editor
Jay Bernhardt
Editorial Assistant
Department of Health Behavior and Health Education
School of Public Health
University of North Carolina