Editors’ Note

Of Green Bananas and Chili Peppers

Luigi Ferrucci and Eleanor M. Simonsick

A key desire in becoming Editor was to expand the function of the Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences from a chronicle of research findings to an inspirational bulletin of research ideas and promising scientific pathways to pursue. Over the past year, we had a major administrative objective—reducing the backlog and lag time between acceptance and publication and improving the quality of accepted material. Thanks to the increased number of pages made available by the Publication Committee of The Gerontological Society of America, the effort was quite successful. It is now time to move on and attempt our higher aspirations.

In this issue of the Journal, as part of the initial and continuing effort to move the Journal from a mere repository of information to a generator of fresh research ideas, we introduce two new article types—``Green Bananas” and “Chili Peppers.” Green Bananas constitute largely theoretical discussions of 1500–3000 words intended to present novel ideas and areas of inquiry that emerge from thinking “outside the box,” from applying the perspectives, principles, or methodologies of other disciplines to aging-related issues and concerns. A Green Banana should present a plausible but as-yet-untested hypothesis. We are interested in controversial and possibly outrageous viewpoints. Appropriate data for testing such hypotheses may be emergent or currently available but not considered or examined in light of such hypotheses before.

Without adequate exposure and attention, creative insightful thoughts and reflections can whither and die. Ideally, the publication of Green Bananas would facilitate communication and collaboration across scientific disciplines and bring together ideas and resources; the hypothesis generators and data keepers. Amazing new technology is emerging almost daily and boosting scientific knowledge toward new, unexplored frontiers. Limitless interaction and cooperation between scientists, and access to massive amounts of information is available within the click of a mouse. Yet, today more than ever, what is most needed are the imaginative minds who can see far in the dark a tiny spark of light that can drive our search.

Main attributes of a Green Banana are a provocative title and brief abstract (less than 150 words) that presents the idea in essence with crisp journalistic wording. Diagrams, models, and figures are preferred over tables and text to illustrate concepts and convey ideas, with no more than 30 references that support the plausibility of the hypotheses presented. We acknowledge that many Green Bananas may fail to ripen and may quickly rot, but if only one grows sweet, we believe the cost worth the effort.

Chili Peppers constitute very brief, 500 words or less, reports of “burning” research ideas and methodologies and “hot” clinical treatments and tests. Chili Peppers require a descriptive title and concise summary of the new or emerging technologies or applications, clinical treatments, diagnostic procedures, or biological markers presented. These reports require no abstract, but should provide a comprehensive list of sources and contacts, including Internet addresses and web pages. We ask our readers and scientists in different fields to supply these pieces. They will be reviewed by the Editor and, if considered interesting, published promptly.

Our efforts to spice up the Journal have just begun. We welcome ideas for tantalizing dishes and recipes to add to our increasingly rich menu.