Editorial: Past, Present, and Future of Infectious Diseases Society of America Publications

First published in 1904 by the University of Chicago Press (UCP), the Journal of Infectious Diseases is one of the oldest medical research journals in the United States. In 1925, Sinclair Lewis gave it popular exposure in his book Arrowsmith. The young doctor stated that one of his ambitions was to do research worthy of publication in the Journal of Infectious Diseases!

In January 1969, the first issue of the Journal appeared under the official sponsorship of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA). There were only 10 acceptable original articles (even then the rejection rate was over 40%) and along with an invited review, three invited editorials, and news reports from the Society, the National Communicable Disease Center, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and the Food and Drug Administration, the issue barely totaled 100 very wide-margin printed pages. The Reviews of Infectious Diseases (presently Clinical Infectious Diseases) was spawned a decade later. At present, both of these journals appear monthly and together publish over 7000 printed pages per annum. The IDSA owes a profound debt of gratitude to Edward H. Kass for his leadership in establishing our role in publications.

Although the Society now owns both journals, we continue a synergistic, long-standing publishing partnership with UCP. After a prolonged incubation period and much planning, birth of the new electronic version of the Journal of Infectious Diseases is anticipated later this year. Beginning with the January 1999 issue, the Journal will consist of the current monthly print edition and an on-line edition offering both a portable document format (PDF) and an extensively linked electronic version. After only minimal growing pains, Clinical Infectious Diseases is anticipated to matriculate in this format at the start of the new millennium.

Implementation of the on-line version of the Journal already has begun with our partner, UCP. Although our submission process and requirements will not change immediately, we are moving quickly toward all-electronic review and production processes. Eventually, when the system is fully operational, the submitted manuscript will be made available at a Web site by password access to reviewers who can either see the paper on-line or down-load and print it. If needed, a hard copy will be provided to reviewers.

Once accepted for publication, the manuscript will be typeset at UCP as part of the copyediting process. Copyediting is presently performed for IJD in Seattle and for CID in Los Angeles, and typesetting is separately contracted to an outside vendor. The move to consolidated redaction and simultaneous electronic typesetting should allow page proofs to be sent to the author with a much more rapid turn-around time, and once accepted, the paper will be published on-line within a few weeks in both PDF files and a fully linked electronic version. (Currently, the time from acceptance to publication is about 4 months.) At this point, no pagination will be available, but a document identification number will permit citation in other papers and will allow automated updating once pagination is applied. By releasing each article separately, the official date of an article will be the date of its on-line publication, and the print version will indicate the dates of submission, acceptance, and on-line publication. The final electronic issue will appear within a few weeks after closure of the issue and will contain complete pagination identical to that of the print version.

The changes in publication speed that will accompany production of the on-line version will be only one of the advantages to both our authors and readers. An electronic presentation can allow multiple linkages to other databases and can provide information in formats that are not possible in a static, print version. For example, three-dimensional displays of various interactive molecules and sound, color, and video displays of clinical and laboratory findings will bring the publication to virtual reality. Finally, it is not our plan to throw out the baby with the bath water. The printed version will continue to feature printed articles of the highest quality.

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