In the past decade, the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)* has prospered and flourished under the direction of the immediate past editor, Mary Corcoran, and past editor Betty Hasselkuss. Both editors understood the unique challenges of the journal and worked diligently to successfully increase the journal’s index rating (in the larger scholarly community), the experimental rigor of AJOT research articles, the dissemination of knowledge regarding the meaning of occupation to health and well-being, and the translation of research to practice. Because of their contributions, and with the guidance of the profession’s *Centennial Vision* (AOTA, 2007a), the journal is now uniquely poised to rise to the challenges facing health care and the scientific community in the next 5 years and beyond.

The *Centennial Vision* outlines six broad practice areas (children and youth; productive aging; mental health; health and wellness; work and industry; and rehabilitation, disability, and participation) and charges the profession to secure societal recognition as a “powerful, widely recognized, science-driven, and evidence-based profession with a globally connected and diverse workforce meeting society’s occupational needs” (AOTA, 2007a, p. 613). In accordance with this vision, members of the Representative Assembly have charged the association to provide full-text availability of AJOT articles through electronic databases commonly accessed by members of the profession as well as by researchers, scholars, practitioners, and consumers in the larger national and international communities (AOTA, 2007b). The ease of information access through online databases has provided the profession with a unique and opportune means by which occupational therapy services and research can become better understood by the larger society. The opportunity to enhance the profession’s public image through direct access to literature describing our evidence-based practices has never been as ripe. As a profession, occupational therapists must take ownership of our growing body of research and theoretical knowledge, but we must also acknowledge that such information will greatly benefit society at large and should thus be made available for this humanitarian purpose.

As managed care organizations continue to limit health care services and require greater out-of-pocket consumer contributions, all health professions must continue to compete for health care dollars at the same time as they are charged with providing research evidence supporting the efficacy of practice. Under the editorial guidance of Dr. Corcoran, and as more members of the profession have obtained expertise in research methodologies, AJOT has begun to meet this challenge by publishing more experimentally rigorous research articles supporting the effectiveness, safety, patient satisfaction, and cost- and time-efficiency of occupational therapy services. To demonstrate the profession’s value to both society and insurers, as the new editor-in-chief I will ensure that the journal continues to increase its publication of efficacy studies providing research evidence for the six broad practice areas outlined in the *Centennial Vision*. Similarly, articles providing reliability and validity data supporting the profession’s evaluation instruments will continue to be a priority for publication.

In the coming years, society will continue to witness an aging population, increased community participation of people with chronic disabilities, and enhanced health and an increased lifespan for populations with chronic diseases and functional impairments. Members of society are demanding higher qualities of life, marked by meaningful occupations throughout the lifespan and in all areas of community participation. At no greater time in our history
has the importance of the study of occupation been as evident (Baum, 2007; Clark & Jackson, 2006; Moyers, 2007). The theoretical basis of occupation as it is studied through occupational science and neuro-biological disciplines is critical to unearth the vast connections among occupation, health, and well-being. In response to this opportunity and challenge, as editor-in-chief, I will ensure that AJOT continues to seek and publish articles exploring the underpinnings of occupational meaning and its relationship to health (e.g., to healthy aging; to the mastery of developmental milestones; and to the optimum function of cognitive skills, emotional and psychosocial health, and neuromusculoskeletal and cardiopulmonary integrity throughout the lifespan).

The journal will also continue to provide a forum for members to discuss and debate topical questions whose answers will provide direction for the continued growth and evolution of the profession. In this regard, AJOT will seek to be a balanced mechanism through which members can openly discuss critical issues shaping the future of the profession. Such issues may include a discussion of entry-level criteria for practitioners, curriculum standards and criteria for different degrees, scope of practice, and models guiding the sequence of evaluation and treatment. Member debate and discussion will be encouraged through The Issue Is and Letters to the Editor.

As the journal continues to enhance its research rigor and report literature of high value to the profession and scientific community, it must always strive to be accessible and meaningful to practitioners on the frontline of health care whose time and attention are increasingly limited by greater insurer-imposed constraints and paperwork than in previous eras. The translation of research to practice is a major goal of AJOT, and as editor-in-chief I am proposing two new features to support practitioner interest and involvement in the journal. One is an annual column summarizing the most recent research evidence for specific occupational therapy interventions. Such information would be easy to access and would provide clinicians with up-to-date research evidence needed to challenge insurer service denials.

A second feature will be directly linked to selected research articles demonstrating the efficacy of a specific practice method through quantitative research designs. A brief practitioner or consumer report will directly follow such selected research articles and will provide an opportunity for a practitioner, a consumer, or both to narratively describe how the intervention effectively addressed the consumer’s occupational roles, rituals, habits, and routines. In this way, practitioners and consumers can directly observe the clinical relevance of interventions having reported statistical significance.

Finally, in an effort to help members better understand and successfully participate in the journal submission process, AJOT will continue to seek methods to streamline and demystify the article submission and review process. Reviewer criteria will now be posted on AOTA’s Web site so that members can understand the elements of well-written papers that have solid research designs and theoretical bases. The review time will be maintained at a 3-month period, authors will be asked to return resubmissions within 90 days, and resubmissions will be reviewed in less than 3 months. Authors will have in the near future the option of online submission to further reduce time and consumption of paper resources.

As AJOT prepares to meet the challenges of the Centennial Vision, the journal will strive to reflect the profession’s global connectedness and diverse workforce. To best rise to the challenges before us, we must unite in our commitment to the profession but continue to value our diversity and differing perspectives. We must aim to be an inclusive profession in which different perspectives are acknowledged as equally valuable and able to contribute to the profession’s continued viability in unique and important ways. As the new editor-in-chief of AJOT, my goal is to reflect this balanced view through a diversity of research, theoretical papers, and debate. I look forward to the stimulation and new learning that will come through your participation and collaboration in the journal’s continued growth. ▲

References