An Update from the Editor-in-Chief

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It has been a year since I began as the Editor-in-Chief of *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* (*CEBP*), the leading subspecialty journal for scientifically meritorious reports on fundamental and applied population-based and population-focused cancer research. As promised in my message in the March 2019 issue, I am writing to provide updates, including on the Journal's vision and scope.

New Deputy Editors

We are excited that Scarlett Gomez, PhD, MPH, and Nicolas Wentzensen, MD, PhD, MS, have joined *CEBP* as the new Deputy Editors. Dr. Gomez, Professor as the University of California San Francisco (San Francisco, CA), brings to the Journal her expertise as an epidemiologist with focus on the links between social determinants of health and cancer risk to inform population impact. Dr. Wentzensen, Senior Investigator at the NCI (Bethesda, MD), brings his expertise in molecular etiology and prevention of cervical, ovarian, and endometrial cancers and moving etiologic discoveries into clinical or public health practice. In partnership with American Association of Cancer Research (AACR) publications, Scarlett, Nicolas, and I work together to refine the Journal's vision and scope as our field advances. The Deputy Editors provide consultation to the Senior Editors and authors from their respective disciplinary and substantive areas of expertise, and lead the development of special content such as Focus Issues.

Vision for *CEBP*

The current editorial and editorial management team continues to build on the impressive efforts and successes of the prior team to advance *CEBP*'s status. Our vision for *CEBP* is: *To be the population science cancer research journal with a reputation on par with leading basic and clinical cancer research journals.* As such, we aim for the Journal to be:

- Recognized throughout the United States and world by established and emerging population science cancer researchers, by basic and clinical cancer researchers, and by cancer-related public health practitioners and policymakers for its methodologically sound, field-advancing, population-based, and population-focused cancer research content and editorial rigor.
- Sought by authors as the publication home for population science studies across the cancer control continuum that are innovative in concept and approach, especially those have the greatest potential to contribute evidence to influence public health practice, policies, and recommendations on cancer.
- Regarded as the population science cancer research journal for which an expert would be most proud to be a reviewer and consequently produce rigorous, fair, and timely reviews that enhance the authors' report on their research irrespective of whether accepted for publication, and that inform editorial decision-making.
- Regarded as the population science cancer research journal for which an expert would be most proud to be an editor and consequently, committed to realizing its vision and goals, and to promoting editorial rigor.

Scope

We are fully committed to publishing the cancer research areas in the Journal's title—epidemiology, biomarkers, and prevention, especially articles describing the burden of cancer, uncovering possible causes of cancer and its progression, and informing and evaluating strategies for cancer prevention, early detection, cancer survivorship, and closing the cancer disparities gap. *CEBP*'s goals naturally intersect with the mission of AACR's Molecular Epidemiology Group (MEG) at multiple points, and as the official journal for MEG, *CEBP* will continue to foster transdisciplinary cancer research in human populations. In remarks I gave at the MEG meeting during the AACR Annual Meeting, I explained that the Journal is the home for population-based and population-focused cancer research. A few attendees inquired about the difference. By population-based, we mean research conducted in populations, cohorts, communities, and other well-defined groups of people. By population-focused, we mean discovery and formative research and early-phase testing in well-defined and appropriately selected groups of people with the goal of developing tools or strategies for measurement in cohort studies and/or implementation in populations for public health impact in the future. Keeping a population perspective moves us all closer to achieving *CEBP*'s tagline of "Translating Science to Populations."

Scope expansion to include cancer care delivery and implementation science research

Population science cancer research continues to evolve rapidly. Think of the coupling of molecular pathology and "omics" with scaled-up traditional epidemiologic studies realized via consortial collaboration over the last 10 years. Thus, periodically, we assess the Journal's scope. We do this in multiple ways. We rely on the Editorial Board members and the Senior Editors, as nationally and internationally known experts, to keep us aware of such trends in

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the field, to identify areas that are emerging, and to point out underappreciated areas during annual retreats and on an *ad hoc* basis. The Journal's expert staff also performs periodic, data-driven assessments of publishing and grant funding trends across the field. For example, at the Editorial Board meeting held during the 2019 AACR Annual Meeting, the Editorial Board members identified areas within the cancer prevention scope of the Journal that merit highlighting—cancer care delivery and implementation science research. Both areas are studied using population science methods, are population-focused if not population-based, and address how to reduce the burden of cancer. Next, a Deputy Editor convened a time-limited work group to develop recommendations for modifying the scope and reported at the Senior Editor's retreat. These areas were seconded at the Senior Editors retreat, so cancer care delivery and implementation science research are explicitly stated in the Journal's printed and online scope starting with the January 2020 issue. We also commissioned a piece on implementation science research to educate our readership, which will publish in a future issue.

Biomarkers scope clarification

In 2019, we noted an increase in the number of submitted articles reporting on the discovery, evaluation, and validation/confirmation of biomarkers of all types, risk, exposure, early detection, prognosis, and predictive (i.e., treatment response), and in multiple biospecimens—blood, urine, and tissue. Some of these articles reporting on the evaluation of a biomarker in relation to an outcome conducted their work in large cohort studies, while others conducted their work using small numbers of handy biospecimens without explication of specimen provenance or their sampling for the study. We were excited that so many authors identified *CEBP* as a possible publication home (!), yet some of the submitted articles, while addressing "biomarkers," did not align with the Journal's scope. So, we convened a time-limited work group and also sought input from long-time Senior Editors handling biomarkers submissions to provide greater clarity about *CEBP*'s biomarker scope, including relative to other AACR journals. Here are the key features for being in scope:

- Nature of the research: population-based or population-focused research.
- Direction of translation of research: basic to population.
- Type of biomarker: risk and screening/early detection biomarkers for use in populations or communities, and population-scale confirmation or effect modification of prognostic and predictive (i.e., treatment response) biomarkers.
- Type of study: methodologically sound study design with well-defined study populations of sufficient size to address the stated biomarker research question.
- Research impact: to inform policy, guidelines, or programmatic interventions at the population or systems level.
- Unique focus: populations with disproportionate burdens of cancer, including race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, sex, gender/sexual minorities, and place/geography.

Features of biomarker studies that are not or may not to be in scope are those where the nature of the research is preclinical or *in vitro*; the type of study conducted involves a small number of biospecimens from clinical populations without a clear sampling frame; the direction of translation is from basic to clinical sciences; the type of biomarker addressed is prognostic or treatment/intervention response for patients and high-risk individuals; and the research impact is to inform clinical interventions, including prevention and interception at the individual patient level.

However, what may be in scope are larger studies of prognostic and predictive biomarkers in which the primary research question is how characteristics of persons, especially modifiable, influence the effectiveness of the biomarker; in other words, effect modification. Such studies tend to be larger and based on population-scale studies (e.g., health systems, Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results). Again, our goal for making these biomarker scope clarifications is to maintain *CEBP*'s dedication to "Translating Science to Populations."

Cancer survivorship research scope clarification

Cancer survivorship is an important area within *CEBP*'s scope. At the 2019 AACR Annual Meeting, the AACR Publications Committee awarded the Frederick P. Li (Editor-in-Chief, 1997–2002) Award, given for an article published in *CEBP* that has had a major impact on the fields represented by the Journal's content area, to Dr. Janet de Moor and her colleagues for their article "Cancer Survivors in the United States: Prevalence across the Survivorship Trajectory and Implications for Care" (http://cebp.aacrjournals.org/content/22/4/561). As this article indicated, the population of cancer survivors continues to increase. And with that increase, research on a wide array of survivorship topics, including risk, prevention, and control of noncancer outcomes must be addressed. At a discussion with young investigators recently, I was asked where articles reporting research on noncancer outcomes research in cancer survivors can be published. *CEBP* welcomes such research in cancer survivor populations!

Submissions

We expect all submissions to meet *CEBP*'s expectations for methodologic soundness, innovation, impact, and of course, scope. We discourage the submission of articles that are underpowered, replicative without filling new knowledge gaps, or use a poorer design from an inferential perspective than other studies published on the same topic. We encourage submissions that leverage new design or measurement methods; that address understudied, underappreciated, or emerging cancer problems and subpopulations; that have nearer term potential to inform public health practice, policy, and recommendations on cancer; and that are conducted by large consortia that address questions that are not addressable even in a large cohort study, including associations in subpopulations. We also encourage high-quality systematic reviews and meta-analyses that are not replicative of what has been recently published elsewhere. If a prior meta-analysis exists, the submission must have meaningful updates.

We encourage investigators to think about the translational potential, including the steps needed to translate from science to populations, to optimally design their research studies. Then, after the research is complete, where appropriate, in the Discussion section of the article, convey the translational potential of their findings and/or the barriers that need to be overcome to translate the science to the populations. Doing so will help move us collectively closer to achieving our tagline.

Cancer center population science research

Investigators who conduct cancer research within *CEBP*'s scope have affiliations in many different venues, including schools of public health; schools of medicine; universities; local, state, and federal government institutions, agencies, and centers; independent research institutes; private sector organizations; and cancer centers, including

NCI-designated comprehensive cancer centers. We welcome in-scope submissions from investigators from all of these venues. With respect to cancer centers, NCI's Cancer Center Support Grant funding (P30) requires the conduct of research relevant to the cancer problems in cancer center's catchment area. Given its vision and scope, *CEBP* is the publication home for high-caliber, innovative, and impactful population science research addressing catchment area cancer problems conducted by cancer center members. This includes our expanded scope research areas of cancer care delivery research and implementation science research. This year, we sent a letter to the directors of all 70 NCI-designated cancer centers and NCI's Cancer Centers Branch apprising them of *CEBP's* scope and its reputation in the research community.

Special Content

In addition to publishing peer-reviewed articles, reviews (systematic, inclusive of meta-analyses, and narrative), commentaries (invited), editorials (invited), and letters to the editor (proffered), *CEBP* publishes special content regularly.

Cancer Progress and Priorities

Be on the lookout for Cancer Progress and Priorities articles authored by recognized national and international experts on cancer statistics, trends, risk factors, and gaps in knowledge. These articles each address one cancer site. The first ones published are on uterine (https://cebp.aacrjournals.org/content/27/9/985), lung (https://cebp.aacrjournals.org/content/28/10/1563), and prostate (https://cebp.aacrjournals.org/content/29/2/267) cancers. Next up is pediatric cancers. Later in 2020, you will see breast and colorectal cancer. Expect to see Cancer Progress and Priorities articles published 3 to 4 times per year. Consider using these pithy pieces in teaching undergraduate, and public health, medical, and other graduate students, and in educating policymakers. Cite them in providing background and in support of the research you propose in grant applications or in the write-up of the research you have conducted.

Focus Issues

Within some issues of *CEBP*, you will notice articles listed under the Focus Issue heading in the table of contents. These are collections of peer-reviewed research articles, reviews, and commentaries that illuminate contemporary underappreciated, emerging, methodologic, or long-standing unsolved cancer research problems. They usually have an article that introduces the collection and places the topic and articles in context. Sometimes, Focus Issues develop from planned AACR special conferences, other times, editors propose topics, or even authors propose topics. Some articles are invited, others are by broad calls for articles. Recent past Focus Issue collections can be found at https://cebp.aacrjournals.org/focus-archive-2019. Expect to see three Focus Issues in 2020 and early 2021: "Modernizing Population Science" and "Environmental Carcinogenesis," which are both products of AACR special conferences, and "Early Detection Research Network," which highlights the 20th anniversary of the NCI's infrastructure and resources for biomarker discovery, development, and validation. If you have a population-focused cancer topic that you think merits highlighting as a Focus Issue, e-mail us at cebp@aacr.org.

Offprint collections

When you attend an AACR conference or other major population science conferences with a cancer component, you may have picked up a *CEBP* offprint collection, such as the Best of *CEBP* offprint collection distributed at the 2019 Annual Meeting. Sometimes, *CEBP* prints the articles comprising a Focus Issue as an offprint collection for distribution at specialty cancer conferences such as The AACR Science of Cancer Health Disparities meeting (https://cebp.aacrjournals.org/disparities). If you attended the AACR Special Conference on The Microbiome, Viruses, and Cancer in February, you may have seen an on-topic collection online. Going forward, periodically, we plan to distribute collections of research that may be useful for the development of cancer-relevant public health policy, in fulfillment of the Journal's goal of "Translating Science to Populations."

Letters to the Editor

In 2019, we provided more clarity about the intent of Letters to the Editor. Our goal is to promote scientific discourse between readers and authors by providing this mechanism for comment after an article has been published in *CEBP*. We discourage Letters to the Editor that have as the sole purpose the promotion of one's own research by referring to a recently published *CEBP* article. We also discourage letters that simply speculate about a biological explanation for the findings that is not testable by the authors or other population-based scientists.

Communicating Content to Stakeholders

In addition to publishing articles, *CEBP* promotes select published research findings to key audiences. For Journal readers, look for Highlights of four articles identified by the Senior Editors as being of particular scientific merit. You will see this Highlights section along the right-hand side of the Table of Contents for each issue. Each month, AACR releases Editors' picks for each AACR journal, including *CEBP* (https://aacrjournals.org/content/editors-picks?utm_source=edpickslanding&utm_medium=cebpmenu&utm_campaign=menu).

To alert the broader scientific and policymaking communities to newly published articles of particular impact, *CEBP* uses social media and PR, including the AACR blog, Cancer Research Catalyst. The Journal even communicates content via its issue covers. Cover images are selected on the basis of visual interest, and the article from which the image is derived is listed for the readers. So, if you are interested in having your article considered for an issue, be sure to show results in an image format.

Becoming a Reviewer for *CEBP*

As researchers who publish their research in the scientific literature, we have the obligation to participate as peer reviewers to ensure that contributions advance knowledge by being scientifically sound, innovative, and have the potential for impact. I am often asked by students, fellows, and early-stage investigators how they "get on the list" to be a journal article reviewer. *CEBP*'s Senior Editors are responsible for identifying expert peer reviewers for submitted articles and for expanding the pool of new, trusted reviewers. Senior Editors use AACR's search tools to find investigators who have published on similar topics in AACR's suite of journals or in other leading journals, including junior investigators. Selected reviewers who are not able to review a particular article often provide recommendations for other reviewers. We also encourage mentors selected as a reviewer to

co-review with a graduate student or postdoctoral fellow, and to let us know that they have done so, so that we can include the trainee in AACR's online manuscript review system. If you have reviewed for *CEBP* previously, be sure to keep your reviewer expertise classifications up-to-date in that system.

CEBP's Impact Factor

How exciting it is that *CEBP* now has an impact factor of 5.057! This achievement is fully due to the leadership of the former Editor-in-Chief Timothy Rebbeck, the efforts of the Journal's editors and its professional editorial management staff, the contributions of the reviewers, and importantly, the authors who submitted high-caliber, impactful research articles.

In closing, for those of you who are curious about being an editor-in-chief of an AACR journal, I am very much enjoying this role! I am grateful to the Journal's professional editorial staff for guiding me and the new Deputy Editors and Senior Editors in our new efforts.