

Rapids, consultants, letters, self-publishing and more... "The more things change, the more they stay the same"

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Editorial

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Science moves faster and faster, and investigators are more anxious than ever to have their best work reviewed, accepted, and published as quickly as possible—the sooner, the better. At the same time, a discriminating readership wants the opportunity to comment on the merit (or lack thereof) of highlighted works. As Editors, we hear these often cacophonous demands on an almost daily basis. In addition, the advent of electronic publishing has changed the basic rules of the trade at rates we could not have anticipated. Nevertheless, just as in the science we publish, we feel that it is more important to get things right than to get them first. Therefore, to respond to our readers' demands and to take advantage of electronic publishing capabilities, we are beginning to institute several changes in the *Journal's* policies and practices. These are being undertaken to capture the best science possible, to deliver the work to our readers with due speed, and to give our readers the opportunity to discuss published studies with our authors.

First, to attract the most original and important work, we have revamped the guidelines for submitting and handling Rapid publications. As spelled out in the new Editorial Policies and Practices, in this issue and on the website at www.jci.org, papers published under this heading will undergo rapid review and will be accepted or rejected within two weeks of the date of submission. Accepted Rapids will be published in the next available print issue, currently four to six weeks from the date of acceptance. Furthermore, starting in January of 1999, Rapids will be published even more quickly on the *JCI* website—within two weeks of acceptance, as well as in a subsequent print issue. Specific details will be provided closer to the initiation of this new web-before-print publication.

Of course, a program of accelerated review must be coupled with strong assurances that the perceived timeliness of a work does not supersede careful attention to scientific rigor. If you read the masthead, you probably noted that we have rebuilt the Board of Consulting Editors, a task every Editor has had to assume. However, this time we have a larger group, and we have charged them with a specific task: refereeing manuscripts under consideration for Rapid publication. By choosing experts in a wide range of fields, we hope to assure all submitting authors that they will receive rapid, fair, and rigorous reviews from a dedicated group of referees.

In addition to our plans for Rapid publications, we will also begin an electronic "Letters to the Editor" column. This will be moderated by the Editorial Board and will provide a long-sought forum for readers and authors to discuss published manuscripts or topics of relevance to the *JCI* readership. This

column will begin on October 1 of this year. Although this feature will be available only on the website, we are looking forward to lively discussions of scientific interest and encourage everyone to take advantage of this opportunity to advance science through frank but fair discussions. Specific policies regarding these letters will be posted on the website, and its availability will be announced on both the website and in print.

To make these changes and to begin adding significantly to our printed front matter, both in Editorials and in Perspectives, the Editors and the Society have also decided to make another significant change. Beginning with the first January issue of 1999, the *Journal* will begin to self-publish out of the Editorial Office at the University of Michigan. To that end, we have hired Mr. John Hawley, the former Production Manager for Nature America, as our Publishing Director. He has begun assembling a staff of layout artists, copy editors, and support personnel to effect the transition. This decision was not taken lightly, and we believe it will only increase the quality and efficiency of the *JCI*, while permitting us to control both cost and content in the highly competitive area of biomedical publishing. This transition will be complete with the first January issue of 1999. In addition to self-publishing, the *JCI* will be redesigned in time for the re-launch. Although we are excited at the prospect of self-publishing, we remain very grateful to The Rockefeller University Press for its years of service to the Society and the *Journal*.

With all these changes in place, it is important to stress that our primary goals remain unchanged: disseminating solid and exciting advances in the biomedical sciences. The *Journal's* long-standing policy of having the entire Editorial Board assembled at a single institution so that new submissions can be discussed and debated (as well as rebuttals considered) by all members has served us well, and will continue. As I said in my first editorial (1), this is not the Editors' journal, it is your journal. We are taking the actions outlined above to increase the value of the *JCI* for our readers and authors. We hope you'll continue to tell us how we are doing.

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for the Editorial Board

References

1. Weiss, S.J. 1997. Speed, competition, rigor, and creativity: striking a delicate balance. *J. Clin. Invest.* 99:817–818.