The challenges of the scholarship in the field of disability and health

The volume this year marks our fifth anniversary of publication for Disability and Health Journal. In this time the Journal has enjoyed significant accomplishments, and we the Editors are grateful for the support and enthusiasm of authors, reviewers, readers, the Editorial Board, the American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD), and the Publishers. In the past 4 years we have:

- Achieved Indexing through both the National Library of Medicine (Medline) and Thomson Reuters (Institute for Scientific Information/Journal Citation Reports/Impact Factor);
- Maintained a track record of high level of original research publications;
- Created a home for authors to submit their research and perspectives on disability related to health, health promotion, health care access and delivery, social participation, epidemiology, and international issues;
- Cultivated an increasing readership for topics about disability and health;
- Identified events and issues important to disability, health, and rehabilitation science with special issues or parts of issues.

The achievement of Indexing does bear more discussion. Journals are reviewed through the US National Library of Medicine Literature Selection Technical Review Committee, and are recommended for inclusion in Medline based on a rigorous review process. Journals are reviewed as to originality, importance, scope, and quality of scientific content. Thomson Reuters has an ongoing evaluation and selection process, involving constant monitoring by editors with knowledge and expertise in specific fields. Journals are reviewed based on qualitative and quantitative measures, with some interest in international diversity of authors. Although many factors were considered in the acceptance decisions, we like to point to the unique scope of the Journal and the high level of research articles. Achieving this after a 2-year publishing history is something about which we can all be proud. This accomplishment is indeed the hallmark achievement of the past 4 years, and we recognize that it has been a joint effort among us all!

However, we have more work to do. We have set the bar at a high level and plan to continue to publish outstanding original research articles, to seek topics of interest to our readership, to encourage evidence-based review submissions, to provide useful and timely reviews to our submitting authors, and to respond to suggestions and criticisms of our journal. Our submissions have increased, and we have reviewed more manuscripts discussing innovative concepts related to disability, novel approaches and methodologies concerning disability and health research, and focused evidence-based reviews. The need for improved communication, policies, and procedures is apparent. The following changes should address our new needs:

- We welcomed Jami Walker, Publishing Editor from Elsevier, at the end of 2011 to DHJO. Her depth of knowledge and many years of experience in journal management and growth have already been felt.
- Alice Landwehr, Managing Editor, began with us in January, 2012. She has more than 15 years experience with the editorial process and also brings a wealth of organizational strategies to improve our processes (see below).
- The website (www.disabilityandhealthjnl.com) and print journal have now had a face-lift to improve use and access. Please especially note (and utilize) the “new issue alert” button now available.
- The Instructions to Authors have been updated, now with clear submission guidelines and requirements, definitions of article types with explanations, and descriptions of required additional information needed prior to publication-all to better assist our authors.
- We plan to make every effort to include more controversial topics that may be of interest to our readership through Editorials or Commentaries (see Instructions to Authors at www.disabilityandhealthjnl.com). We’re asking for contact from potential authors with proposals prior to actual submission to aid in workflow.
- Communication timelines for reviewers and decisions have been shortened to promote increasing submissions of quality manuscripts for publication.
- The editors and publisher will develop a tutorial for reviewers, experienced or new, to appear on our website in an effort to improve the quality (and hopefully timeliness) of our reviews.

However with our changes come additional issues. It is always a challenge to find good reviewers not only with content expertise, but also methodology expertise. We welcome hearing from or about additional volunteers to
review on specific topic or disability areas and conditions (e.g., medical rehabilitation, muscle diseases) or methodologies (e.g., qualitative research, evidence-based reviews) to expand our review capability. We also appreciate suggestions of potential reviewers from invited reviewers who are unable to participate at that time. And we appreciate the patience of our authors and reviewers as we work to improve our communication and timely workflow.

So the work is never done. We plan to maintain our acceptance within both Indexing services for a long time to come. We believe DHJO represents a leading edge health journal, and are pleased that Elsevier saw the promise and continues to support us. We have come a long way—but have a long path to continue the important work of the Journal!

Thanks to all!
The Editors—Suzanne McDermott and Peggy Turk