Introduction From the New Editors

Lindsay S. Nagamatsu1 and Patricia C. Heyn2

1School of Kinesiology, Faculty of Health Sciences, Western University, London, ON, Canada; 2Center for Optimal Aging, Marymount University, Arlington, VA, USA

It is with honor that we have been selected to serve as Co-Editor-in-Chiefs for the Journal of Aging and Physical Activity (JAPA). As previous Associate Editors for the journal, we have both contributed to JAPA over the past many years by making editorial recommendations and shaping the strategic direction of the journal. We are excited to take on this new role where we will be able to have greater impact for leading the mission of JAPA to disseminate multidisciplinary research on the bi-directional relationship between physical activity and aging. With the growing population of older adults globally and the critical role that physical activity plays in physiological, cognitive, and mental health, as well as quality of life, this research is more important than ever for understanding the aging process and optimizing life and healthspan into our later years.

First and foremost, we would like to sincerely thank our predecessor Dr. Samuel Nyman for his leadership over the past three years. During his tenure as Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Nyman significantly advanced the impact of JAPA by adding rigor and best publication standard practices. Among his many accomplishments, he increased the timeliness of reviews which now stand at an average of 54-60 days for first decisions on reviewed articles, improved the process for qualitative research papers by adding a new subsection to the instructions for authors based on the expertise of our qualitative Associate Editors, and introduced a series of high impact Virtual Special Issues with five published so far, the first of which was a collection from the past editors. Collectively, these initiatives have created a better experience for everyone that engages with JAPA, whether as an author or reader, and has promoted the timely publication of top-quality research in the field. We wish Samuel all the best in his new role as Head of the Department of Psychology at the University of Winchester where the impact of his leadership will continue to be appreciated.

We would like to take this opportunity to briefly introduce ourselves to the contributors and readers of JAPA. Dr. Nagamatsu is an Assistant Professor in the School of Kinesiology, Faculty of Health Sciences at Western University, Canada. She is the Director of the Exercise, Mobility, and Brain Health Lab where her multidisciplinary research program examines the effects of exercise interventions on cognition and brain health in clinical and non-clinical populations of older adults. As a cognitive psychologist, Dr. Nagamatsu uses neuroimaging techniques (MRI, EEG) which allows her to examine the underlying functional and structural correlates linking exercise and cognition. Dr. Heyn is the Director of the Center for Optimal Aging and a Professor of Physical Therapy at Marymount University, Arlington, USA. Dr. Heyn’s research is multidisciplinary and focus on improving the functional quality of life of individuals with dementia, Alzheimer’s disease as well as individuals aging with disabilities. She has extensive experience in literature landscaping and synthesis methodologies for the development of best practices and clinical guidelines.

With our combined passion for promoting inclusive, equitable, and accessible physical activity for healthy living to all older adults globally, we are committed to continuing to build and advance JAPA as a leading representative journal in multidisciplinary research on aging and physical activity. We will ensure that JAPA continues to lead the field through timely publication of high-quality research, highlighting and promoting important themes via Virtual Special Issues, and expand the journal editorial board and publication portfolio to represent the older adult population.

Along with ensuring the integrity and quality of research published by JAPA, there are several new initiatives that we have already started brainstorming and plan to integrate into JAPA. One example is strengthening our social media presence to increase the mobilization and impact of the knowledge published in JAPA, which will include easily digestible and accessible take away messages for policymakers and health care practitioners so that the science can be put into practice immediately. We also plan to create a more transparent and streamlined editorial process for authors and peer reviewers. As previously mentioned, we will be guided by inclusive and diverse health physical activity equity practices. Further, we highly value the mentorship and training of junior researchers. Therefore, we plan to create new opportunities for trainees to be involved with the publishing process, from peer review to authorship.

In closing, we would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the team at JAPA that ensures the success of the journal – the administrative support at Human Kinetics provided by Tammy Miller and Christina Johnson; the Associate Editors who review manuscripts, assign peer reviewers, and make editorial recommendations; and the Editorial Board who are dedicated to regularly serving to peer review manuscripts for JAPA. We look forward to working and hearing from you during our term as Co-Editor-in-Chiefs to continue this important work for the field. Thank you to the authors who submit their work to JAPA; we are very excited to read about your new and meaningful research in this area in the coming years. And finally, a special thanks to the readers of JAPA for engaging with the work that we do. We look forward to the future of JAPA where we will strive to make it an impactful and inclusive place for research in this vital field. If you have suggestions for how to improve JAPA we welcome your input. Please email either of us with your valuable feedback to lnagamat@uwo.ca or patricia.heyn@marymount.edu.