Reflections on 30 Years of Service to the *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity* Editorial Board

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Earlier this year, I decided that the time is right for me to step aside from the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity* (JAPA). Three decades have passed since I was charged by Human Kinetics with formulating the inaugural Editorial Board of the first journal to focus exclusively on the relationship between physical activity and aging. By the early 1990s, the need for a multidisciplinary journal with a specialized emphasis in the area of aging and physical activity had become apparent. While many excellent journals were publishing articles of relevance to the study of both aging and physical activity, prior to the advent of JAPA, no single outlet had as its focus, exclusively, the study of aging and physical activity.

For more than 30 years, in the pages of this journal, scholars and practitioners have presented evidence for the positive impact of regular physical activity on the aging process. Our colleagues, friends, and collaborators have advocated for the promotion and adoption of physically active lifestyles as an affordable and effective means to prevent chronic diseases and conditions and thereby to enhance the independence and quality of life of older persons. Many articles have elucidated the science underlying exercise and the aging process. Others have sought to build awareness of the importance of physical activity among health professionals and policy makers. Still others have emphasized the need to disseminate information about physical activity to the general public. I suspect that anyone scanning the table of contents of JAPA would agree with me that we have made significant progress toward the achievement of these goals. Among older persons, physical activity is no longer considered an optional, somewhat fringe activity, the choice of a small but active minority. Around the world we have come to realize that physical activity is a prerequisite for healthy and successful aging. It has become apparent that strategies to promote active and successful aging must be integrated into a comprehensive and far-reaching public policy that embraces a multisectoral approach to aging.

When my time on the board began, my interest in aging and physical activity was largely hypothetical. However, with the passage of time, for me and for all of us, the topic becomes both more practical and more personal. On the upside, I have been fortunate to be able to observe first-hand how a lifelong commitment to daily activity has enabled me to remain actively engaged. Although I am now closer to 70 than 60 years of age, I feel exceptionally fortunate to be able to exercise alongside my four school aged children, hopefully setting them up for a lifetime of activity. On a less positive note, almost every day I encounter far too many individuals who have not been as fortunate as myself. Across our nation, and throughout the world, a pandemic of obesity and inactivity is robbing many older adults of the quality of life and personal empowerment they deserve in old age. A myriad of economic, social, and political challenges threatens the health, safety, and security of millions of older persons.

A number of years ago, in an address before the National Academy of Kinesiology, I argued that strategies for the promotion of successful aging cannot exist in isolation, rather, they must be consistent with and reflective of the economic, political, and cultural realities of the societies in which they are to be implemented. Kinesiologists and other exercise and health professionals have an important role to play in assisting with the development of just, equitable, and age-friendly societies around the world. We can and must advocate for the development of policies and services that emphasize the prevention of inactivity and promote the inclusion and independence of persons of all ages. We have a responsibility to be active leaders in the global campaign to redesign our communities to support activity and inclusion for people of all ages.

Over the past 30 years, we have learned a great deal, and we have come to appreciate the many benefits that accrue from active lifestyles. However, there is much work that remains to be done. For example, we currently have very limited ability to predict the path that aging will take at the individual level. Personally, I would dearly like to know what my life will be like when my 3-year-old daughter goes to college, and what I can do between now and then to influence the rate and extent to which I age. I am confident that advances in genomics and epigenetics will help to increase our understanding of individual differences in the trajectory of human aging and will inform us of which biomarkers we need to keep track of in order to make more accurate predictions about our future lives. Similarly, we do not currently understand why some individuals find sustaining a lifestyle of physical activity so difficult, while others relish almost every opportunity to partake in physical activity. For almost every question we have answered, a new and intriguing question emerges. It is clear to me that the future research agenda around physical activity and aging is both rich and complex. I leave the JAPA board optimistic and encouraged, knowing that a new and dynamic generation of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers have picked up the mantle and are advancing our knowledge and understanding of the centrality of physical activity to successful aging.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to Rainer and Julie Martens for their vision, to the entire Human Kinetics staff for their steadfast support for our journal, and to all my friends and colleagues who have helped made this journey so rewarding. I wish my colleagues on the editorial board well and I look forward to continuing to read the JAPA for many years to come.

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