EDITORIAL

Collaborative, Interdisciplinary Research Teams

James R. Morrow, Jr. and Steven N. Blair

Collaborative Efforts

Publication of a research journal such as the *Journal of Physical Activity & Health* can only be accomplished with the collaborative efforts of many individuals. Foremost among these individuals is the editorial board and external reviewers who provide editors with recommendations about the scientific quality of the work. While there are often split recommendations that result in difficult decisions for editors, collaborative efforts are the *sine qua non* for successful publication. The editorial office must work closely with the editorial board, reviewers, managing editor, publisher, and design experts to have the best science reviewed and published. That does not suggest that decisions are made without error. However, we attempt to be as fair and free from bias as possible when making decisions.

The nature of research in physical activity is undergoing significant change. One seldom hears issues raised about “single authored” papers when promotion and tenure or scientific reputation is mentioned. Clearly, the trend is toward collaborative efforts that result in multi-authored papers. The ever-increasing knowledge base relating physical activity to health often results in multiple researchers working together to complete a task that is cross-disciplinary in nature. The inclusion of behaviorists, clinicians, researchers, basic scientists, statisticians, and educators results in collaborative efforts and, hopefully, better science. It takes collaborative efforts to result in publication of good science. Indeed, we even serve as the co-editors of this journal. The commentary by Dr. Roy Shephard, noted researcher and clinician, which follows points to the collaborative efforts that advance the science of physical activity and health.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) “Roadmap” (nihroadmap.nih.gov), championed by Elias Zerhouni, Director of the NIH, is designed to enhance biomedical research in the 21st century. As such, the Roadmap specifically calls for the development of multidisciplinary research teams as the NIH addresses biomedical research and identifies critical roadblocks and knowledge gaps that constrain rapid advances in biomedical research. “Research Teams of the Future” is 1 of 3 major Roadmap themes. The Roadmap states, “The scale and complexity of today’s biomedical research problems increasingly demands that scientists move beyond the confines of their own discipline and explore new organizational models for team science.” As part of the theme “Research Teams of the Future,” the NIH Roadmap seeks to encourage scientists and scientific institutions to test alternative models for conducting research. Implementation groups in this area are: 1) High-Risk Research, 2) Interdisciplinary Research, and 3) Public-Private
Partnerships. It seems that researchers in physical activity and health are on the right road to success.

However, one must also be careful as the electronic age permits collaborative efforts around the globe. It is potentially easy for scientists to include individuals as authors who have not fully contributed to the work. Some journals (e.g., the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*) publish the contribution made by each author toward successful completion of the research. Others (e.g., *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*) may limit the number of authors that can be included on a published manuscript. Interestingly, we located an electronically published manuscript via PubMed (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?cmd=Retrieve&db=pubmed&dopt=Abstract&list_uids=11580576) that contains the names of 481 authors from 47 institutions. This raises the question of exactly how many authors is too many and how does each contribute to a specific project?

We appreciate the collaborative efforts of the many of you that are making the *Journal of Physical Activity & Health* a success. We encourage additional collaborative efforts and look forward to receiving and publishing the results in the *Journal of Physical Activity & Health*. We will be pleased to receive comments from any of you on issues raised in this editorial.

**Report of Editorial Board Activities**

We held a meeting of the *JPAH* Editorial Board at the American College of Sports Medicine meeting in Indianapolis. Since not all Board members were able to attend and other readers may be interested, we will give a brief update of the meeting here.

First, the editors and publisher are quite pleased with the initial development of *JPAH*. We believe that the first 2 issues have included numerous articles of interest to those interested in physical activity and health. These first 2 issues included 9 research articles, 2 commentaries, and 2 editorials. Through April we had received 56 manuscripts. In addition to the 9 research articles already published, we have another 16 articles and 1 commentary accepted for publication. Several of these are in this issue, and the remainder will be in the 4th issue that will be published in October 2004. There were 10 manuscripts under review at the end of April, and since then we have received several additional manuscripts that are now in the review process. For manuscripts that underwent full review, the average number of days for the reviews was 56 days, with a range of 23-126 days. We are committed to keeping the review cycles short, and we deeply appreciate the efforts of reviewers to be responsive to our timelines. We also are closely monitoring the times from acceptance to publication, and are prepared to take steps to keep this publication lag to a reasonable period.

One item that has pleased us is the broad distribution of articles from several areas of exercise science. In addition, we are excited to have received manuscripts from 11 countries from 5 continents (North America, South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia). This illustrates the true international caliber of the journal, and we look forward to continuing and even expanding the publication of research from investigators from a broad range of countries. We encourage you to continue to send us manuscripts and to invite your friends and colleagues to do the same.
We are grateful for the support we have received from Human Kinetics Publishers. They will continue efforts to market the journal to a wide audience, and we ask for your help in this regard. The larger the subscription list, the broader the exposure for your work published in the journal. It also will be very helpful if you would encourage your institutional library to subscribe to the journal. All of these efforts will provide support for applications that Human Kinetics will make at the appropriate time to have *JPAH* included in various indexes, such as Pub Med.

One final way in which readers of the journal can help is to volunteer to be a reviewer. Please send your name, contact information, and areas of expertise to Shaila Milbry (smilbry@coe.unt.edu), our Student Editorial Assistant, and she will enter the information into our reviewer database.

We appreciate your support of the journal, and with your help it will continue to develop. Publishing, just like research, involves collaborative efforts. Thank you.