Quality and innovation: American Journal of Physiology-Heart and Circulatory Physiology continues the tradition into the digital age

William C. Stanley¹ and Kara Hansell Keehan²

¹Division of Cardiology, Department of Medicine, University of Maryland, and ²Executive Editor for the American Journal of Physiology-Heart and Circulatory Physiology, Baltimore, Maryland

With the change in editorship of the American Journal of Physiology-Heart and Circulatory Physiology (AJP-Heart), we first wish to extend our sincere thanks to Alberto Nasjletti and his team for an outstanding job of piloting the journal for the last six years. The content quality and editorial operations of the journal remain strong, with emphasis on clear critiques, "no nonsense" editorial decisions, and rapid review time. We continue to be a premier journal for cardiovascular physiology, and our scientific impact is solid. When compared with those of other journals in the cardiovascular field, our strengths are many. AJP-Heart offers authors a straightforward manuscript format, without the text and figure limits used elsewhere in the industry, which frequently force authors to arbitrarily truncate their work to fit preconceived specifications. Articles published in AJP-Heart provide readers with a clear focus on the novelty and importance of the scientific questions addressed in the work, thereby enabling readers to easily assess the quality of the science presented. The new editorial team for AJP-Heart will not enforce an arbitrarily low acceptance rate. Manuscripts submitted to the journal will continue to be treated fairly, peer reviewed thoroughly and swiftly, and adjudicated based on the quality of science, not rejected based on perception of potential impact or short-term citation. In summary, our emphasis has been and will remain on quality, not fashion or flashiness. While this may sound rather old fashioned, AJP-Heart has become a proven leader in the field without compromising value or scientific excellence.

With the explosion in technology over the last decade, the mechanics of submission, review, and publishing have become a moving target for all biomedical journals. AJP-Heart, with the tireless support of the American Physiological Society, has emerged as a leader in online manuscript review and publication. The new editorial team plans to capitalize on past successes and rocket into the Web era with a portfolio of new online features and content. Our leading new feature will be podcasts, insightful and witty discussions of “hot topic” papers published in the journal. Together with an associate editor as moderator, an author will address questions about the selected paper and the reviewer will weigh in. These provocative short podcasts will certainly provide unique insight into our featured papers. To expand the journal’s online reach, the new editorial team will launch AJP-Heart into social media by using the outreach of sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, the editors plan to subdivide the table of contents of each print and online issue, organizing our content by research topic. This will enable readers to quickly scan each issue for articles of interest and will also provide a new avenue for building online collections of articles by topic. We hope to further enhance the online journal by making our content archive more readily searchable, an asset to every reader and author. As we migrate away from print deeper into the e-publishing realm, the possibilities of sharing the vitally important content of AJP-Heart become virtually limitless.

The world of cardiovascular physiology is more international than ever before, and so it is fitting that our new editorial team reflects our global outlook. One third of our new associate editors reside outside the United States (Canada, United Kingdom, Italy, The Netherlands, and Japan). As well, our editorial board now includes more members from Europe, Asia, Pacific Islands, South America, and Africa. The editorial team will continue to emphasize acquiring qualified, skilled reviewers and providing clear and concise decision letters with a specific and unified message. If a manuscript is sent back to the authors for revision, we will provide unambiguous instructions on the main issues discussed in the reviews. Equally important, the editors will communicate what is expected of authors in a successfully revised manuscript. Our end goal is to publish high-quality articles within a short peer review time frame.

A high impact publication such as ours needs to increase the number of short-term citations and its citation index. We hope to accomplish this by increasing submissions of high-quality original investigations and by doubling the publication of review papers. At present the journal publishes approximately 10 to 12 review papers each year, which represent only ~2% of the total papers published in AJP-Heart. This average is far below the range of 10 to 25% published in many journals in the field of cardiovascular research. The new editorial team aims to increase the total number of published review articles to 20–25 annually. These review articles will be relatively short and narrow in scope and will not compete with the broad comprehensive reviews published in Physiological Reviews. We are fortunate to have David A. Kass serve as our senior associate editor, whose focus will be to formulate themes and topics for reviews and to solicit papers on both emerging ideas and critical concepts in cardiovascular physiology. In addition, we will publish high-quality methodological and historical reviews unique to heart and circulatory physiology but outside the interest of other cardiovascular publications.

Certainly, we can all agree that AJP-Heart is an esteemed journal with a reputation for publishing solid science. The incoming editorial team welcomes the opportunity to guide this journal into the future. We see the challenges of print publishing, and we look to the exciting channels of communication available on the Web. We are proud of our reputation for fairness and expediency, and we look to continue and improve on these efficient operations. We inherit a fine publication and strive to uphold a tradition of excellence.

DISCLOSURES
No conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, are declared by the author(s).