

Fulfilling our mission to facilitate communication between researchers, practitioners and policy makers

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This issue marks the conclusion of the term of the current Editors of the *Health Promotion Journal of Australia* (HPJA), which commenced in 2008. This is an opportunity to reflect on the progress that the HPJA has made over the past five years towards achieving its mission to “facilitate communication between researchers, practitioners and policymakers”.

To begin, it is worth noting some significant developments that have taken place over this period in the way the HPJA is managed and promoted. In mid-2010 the Manuscript Central (now Scholar One) online manuscript submission was introduced. Benefits of this have been more rapid communication between Editors, authors and reviewers, the ability to track the progress of manuscripts, and the establishment of an online database of reviewers. This was also the inaugural year of the Ray James Award, commemorating the many years of service that Dr Ray James made to health promotion in Australia. The Award is a prize of \$1,000 given to members of the Australian Health Promotion Association (AHPA) who publish an outstanding paper in the HPJA in the preceding year.

More recently, the HPJA has been assigned an Impact Factor for the first time, which will quantify citations to articles published in the journal and provide one indicator of the wider relevance and significance of journal content. In addition, in mid-2012 AHPA committed to further developing the online platform for the journal, building on what is offered through dissemination of hard copy issues and the members section of the AHPA website. This will increase awareness of the HPJA, broaden access to its content, and provide a means for more rapid online publication of articles.

These initiatives are signs of vitality and progress. This is further borne out by the number of manuscripts submitted to the journal, which reached an historic high over the 2011/12 recording year.

A privilege afforded to Editors of the HPJA is the opportunity to be among the first to read the research and evaluation, commentary, analysis, theoretical perspectives and methodological innovations that authors wish to communicate to their peers. A scan over issues published since 2008 shows that the journal has been successful in reflecting the breadth and depth of activity in the health promotion field. A particularly encouraging sign has been the growing number of articles that have presented research and analysis with direct relevance to public policy. The HPJA has published articles addressing food labelling, food marketing to children, men's health policy, alcohol sponsorship and availability, bicycle helmet legislation, among a range of other topics, and in several issues whole sections have been devoted to healthy public policy.

An aspect of research and evaluation practice that the Editors have attempted to raise awareness about is adherence to ethical standards. The need for ethical review and approval has been a topic of lively discussion of the *Writing for the Journal Workshops* held at AHPA National Conferences and the HPJA *Guidelines for Authors* have been adapted to provide advice about this. In conjunction with this, there has been an increase in enquiries to the Editors about the need for the ethical review of research that is being written for publication, and a reduction in the proportion of manuscripts that do not report that institutional approval has been granted.

Looking ahead, the experience of the current Editors also highlights the great potential for the HPJA to expand its reach and impact. The increase in manuscript submissions has been referred to, but well over half the total submissions continue to come from authors in New South Wales and Victoria. There is scope for the journal to better represent health promotion practice and research across other states and territories, and indeed internationally. An analysis of the types of papers published over the past five years shows that there is consistently about one-quarter that could be categorised as intervention research and evaluation. This is also an area where there is scope for growth, particularly in light of the increasing investment in disease prevention and health promotion and the need for a stronger evidence base to inform practice.

The trend towards a larger number of policy-focused articles has been pleasing to observe, but a question that this poses is the extent to which the journal might, and should, serve as a platform for advocacy. The experience of the Editors has shown that some authors are ready to use their research as a basis for strident policy recommendations, while others (reviewers and authors) prefer a more cautious, dispassionate approach. It is, at the least, a healthy sign that these questions are being raised.

In conclusion, I want to thank those who have played vital roles in the development and publication of the HPJA since 2008: Anne Burgi, Peta Neilson and the team at the SUBStitution; our Editorial Advisory Board; the HPJA sub-committee of AHPA; and, of course, the authors and great number of reviewers whose contributions have been the substance for each issue of the journal.

In the next issue readers will be introduced to the new Editorial team: Dr Jonine Jancey, Professor Peter Howat and Professor Colin Binns from Curtin University, and Dr Stacy Carter from the University of Sydney. I wish them and AHPA much success as they manage and grow the HPJA to be a relevant and widely valued journal for researchers, policy makers and practitioners.