

BUMC Proceedings reaches 20-year milestone

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To recall the history of *Baylor University Medical Center (BUMC) Proceedings* is to recall those various events that laid the foundation for creation of the journal. For more than 100 years, BUMC has been one of the leading medical centers in the city. Education and research are paramount objectives of our institution.

In 1972, during my tenure as director of laboratories and pathologist in chief at BUMC, I was involved with the group that established the A. Webb Roberts Center for Continuing Education, of which I became the first dean. In 1980 a similar group worked with the support of Boone Powell, Sr., BUMC president, to create the Baylor Research Foundation, now known as the Baylor Research Institute.

At that time, most of the clinical and research papers produced at BUMC were published without acknowledging BUMC's contribution or support because virtually all of the BUMC staff held clinical professorships at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School. I felt that while contributing as a clinical partner of the medical school, BUMC should also be recognized for its contributions. BUMC had over 100 residents who wished to publish, but there was no vehicle for them to make clinical reports. As a medical center of considerable prestige and reputation, BUMC needed its own vehicle to communicate with its staff and the outside world. So, in January 1988, we published the first issue of *BUMC Proceedings*, which contained 48 pages.

The format of the journal was developed after we reviewed various hospital publications, such as those from the Henry Ford Hospital, the Cleveland Clinic, the Mayo Clinic, the Johns Hopkins Hospital, and others. Page size was a standard sheet of paper folded in half, small enough to fit inside a suit coat pocket or purse. A peer review process was put in place with the first issue to give the journal credibility.

The journal's original nine editorial board members were Dr. N. Y. Zachariah, chairman, and Drs. Adrian Flatt, John Fordtran, Steve Harms, Les Matthews, Patrick O'Leary, George Peters, Richard Roa, and Ralph Tompsett. Rose Kraft was man-

aging editor, and Beverly Peters was responsible for design and graphics. Rose and I had worked together for several years on my four-volume textbook, *Laboratory Medicine*, published by Harper & Row, as well as many other publications. In addition to her years of experience, Rose had received training from prominent editors at Harper & Row, including Jean Woods. Beverly had a medical background and excellent computer skills. Beverly has worked on the journal for the entire 20 years of its existence and continues to do so today; she has been a key player in its success. A knowledgeable board and an excellent staff have supported the journal from its inception.

As with many new ventures, the fledgling journal encountered problems. Some Research Foundation board members and other clinical staff were skeptical of its success. Some felt that as a clinical facility, BUMC should not be publishing and that our product would be inferior to well-known medical journals. At one critical meeting, Bill Hutchison, a prominent citizen and oilman and a board member at Presbyterian Hospital, said he thought the journal was a great idea and that Presbyterian should start a journal. Speaking on behalf of the journal, Dr. Adrian Flatt said, "We should not commit infanticide." The majority of the board members agreed that we should continue publishing *Proceedings*. BUMC President Boone Powell, Jr., strongly concurred and instructed the staff to continue their work.

Unlike most other medical journals, *Proceedings* is distributed free of charge. Ongoing funding from the Baylor Health Care System Foundation has helped make this possible. Individual donors have also assisted with financial contributions. Mr. Louis Beecherl, who gave \$3 million to Baylor Research Institute, gave the journal its first large donation of \$50,000. Smaller donations are important, too, and our readers have responded generously to periodic fundraising campaigns over the years.

In the first issue, I wrote an editorial titled "Why a Baylor Scientific Journal?" in which I stated: "The answer is, what better means for sharing scientific information among the medical staff at Baylor University Medical Center and its affiliated hospitals?" This was the reason for the journal's existence then—and continues to be so today. *Proceedings* was destined to grow in size,

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scope, distribution, and esteem. Those who believed in a BUMC journal from the beginning have seen it become a success. The information that follows provides a timeline of some significant events in the development of the journal.

By the second year of publication, *Proceedings* had gone to a standard journal page size and contained 52 pages. In addition to other articles, a series called “Unknown Case Discussions from Medical Grand Rounds” was published in each issue, while features such as “Research Update” and “Viewpoint” were added. An annual list of scientific publications for members of the medical/scientific staff was compiled and included.

Dr. Bill Roberts was recruited and joined the *Proceedings* editorial board in July 1993. Dr. Roberts has served as editor in chief of *The American Journal of Cardiology* for decades, and in 1994, when I desperately wanted to cut back and be relieved of my responsibilities at BUMC and the medical school, he succeeded me both as dean of the A. Webb Roberts Center for Continuing Education and as editor of *Proceedings*, a role he was eminently qualified to assume. He was assisted in his editorship both by an expanded editorial board and by two associate editors: Dr. Michael A. E. Ramsay in 1998 and Dr. David J. Ballard in 1999.

Dr. Roberts began his feature, “Facts and Ideas from Anywhere,” an interesting compilation of topics from published sources with his added commentary, with his first issue in April 1994. In January 1996, a quarterly radiology report was begun, and in January 1997, a medicolegal report. In January 1998, a write-up of Dr. Roberts’ interview with Mr. Anthony Lyons from Nottingham, England, was published—and his subsequent interviews with a variety of people became a regular feature of the journal under the name “A Conversation with the Editor.” I was flattered and honored to be included as an interviewee in the July 2001 issue. As other departments and miscellany were added, the journal grew. By 2000, the journal had twice as many pages as it had had in 1994, the first year Dr. Roberts served as editor in chief. In addition, between 1992 and 1996, the journal had received three national awards.

By 1997, the number of recipients of *Proceedings* had increased from 2200 to more than 4700, including 53 libraries. Three years later, in 2000, the overall distribution was 6300, including 126 libraries.

In the October 1998 issue, Rose Kraft announced her retirement as managing editor. After an extensive search, Cindy

Orticio was recruited. Cindy brought with her a decade of experience in management, publishing, and editing of scientific publications. She is an asset to the journal and is an excellent managing editor.

A writing awards program for *Proceedings* was announced in the July 1999 issue. The Dr. Ralph R. Tompsett Award, named for the late former chief of internal medicine at BUMC and an original member of the *Proceedings* editorial board, was given for the best article published each year by a member of the housestaff or a fellow.

Beginning in 1999, full-text articles of *BUMC Proceedings* became available on Baylor’s website. Two years later, the *Proceedings* website received 625,151 “hits” in a 6-month period, an average of 3397 per day. Each year, dozens of article PDF files are downloaded at least 1000 times by different users throughout the world.

In 2002, *Proceedings* was accepted for indexing in CINAHL, the Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature. In January 2005, *Proceedings* was accepted for inclusion in PubMed Central. *Proceedings* articles published since 2000 are now featured in PubMed Central and have corresponding entries in PubMed. Users can access *Proceedings* articles through major National Library of Medicine search engines.

In reflecting on my first editorial, “Why a Baylor Scientific Journal?” in the very first issue, I have to say that *Proceedings* has exceeded all of our original expectations. Not only has it provided a tool for sharing scientific information among the medical staff and scientists, but it has promoted writing, enhanced continuing medical education, provided philosophical and ethical viewpoints, and served as a historical record of medical activities at BUMC. Each time someone receives a copy of *Proceedings*, picks it up in a library, accesses it on Baylor’s website, or looks something up on PubMed Central, BUMC’s image as a first-class medical center is enhanced and a wider audience is reached.

Just as from little acorns, properly tended, great oaks grow, so it was with *BUMC Proceedings*. Looking back, I’m proud of what we created and I look forward to seeing what the future has in store for it.

Acknowledgment

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