New journal for the '90s

Welcome to the inaugural issue of The Canadian Journal of Infectious Diseases! Likely your immediate reaction to this greeting, as you sit in your office with desks and floors piled with papers waiting to be read, in dread of the day's mail, is "Who needs another journal?" This was certainly the response of many of us on the editorial board when this journal was first proposed. However, we did not need to reflect far beyond this immediate reaction to appreciate that there was a role and a need for a journal such as this. The consensus in discussions with many individuals participating in infectious diseases research and therapy in Canada was that it was a valid undertaking. In this editorial I will present the reasons behind the initiation of the journal and the goals of this journal, attempting to identify its niche in the medical literature.

A MOVING TARGET

Infectious diseases is an exciting and rapidly changing discipline. New technologies and new insights emerge daily from the basic sciences which support infectious diseases, primarily — but not exclusively — the fields of microbiology and immunology. The excitement of participating in this field today relates in large part to the rapidity with which clinical observations are explored at the basic level, and technologies and insights from the basic level applied at the clinical level. In addition, infectious diseases deals with a moving target. The influenza virus alters its genetic structure yearly; the human immunodeficiency virus appears, apparently de novo; and rheumatic fever disappears and re-emerges. The history of the past decade could be written as a history of infectious diseases. We have moved from Legionnaire's disease to toxic shock syndrome through herpes genitalis and into Lyme disease. Over all of this has emerged the spectre of human immunodeficiency virus 1 with its worldwide impact and vast political and social implications.

Infectious diseases have an important impact at all levels of society. The federal, provincial and municipal governments are all participants in communicable disease surveillance and control. General practitioners, pediatricians and general internists see infectious diseases as a substantial proportion of their practice, and virtually all medical specialties and medical and surgical subspecialties encompass their own special areas of infectious diseases. Our universities have developed many strong programs in microbiology and infectious diseases and we are, in Canada, publishing clinical, basic, and applied research in infectious diseases which is often acknowledged internationally. The 'person on the street' in Canada is constantly reminded of infectious diseases because they have caught the cold or influenza themselves, because their grandparent has finally succumbed to pneumonia after several months to years of decline, or through the impact of the popular media and its enthusiastic reporting of epidemic infections. Thus, there is much to write about infectious diseases.

Where are Canadian writings relevant to infectious diseases currently being published? Certainly researchers strive to publish their observations in the highest profile journal possible and, in many cases, these reports appear in...
journals published outside Canada. Within Canada, publications relating to infectious diseases may be found in many journals, principally The Canadian Medical Association Journal, Clinical and Investigative Medicine, and The Canadian Journal of Public Health. The Canadian Diseases Weekly Report, published by the Laboratory Centre for Disease Control, deals primarily with communicable diseases in Canada and is distributed widely in this country. In addition several Canadian journals publish basic research, particularly The Canadian Journal of Microbiology. Some of these journals, The Canadian Medical Association Journal in particular, which has published position papers from the Canadian Pediatric Society and the Canadian Infectious Diseases Society, have made substantial contributions. However, the general sense is that the literature of infectious diseases in Canada is diffuse and without focus.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN CANADA

The goal of the editorial board of The Canadian Journal of Infectious Diseases is, first, to develop a high calibre scientific journal which publishes original research relating to all aspects of infectious diseases. There is no intent to limit this to Canadian authors. International contributions are welcome and will assist in heightening the journal's profile. The particular niche for The Canadian Journal of Infectious Diseases, however, lies in its being a Canadian journal. We hope it will develop to provide both a focus and a forum for publication and discussion of items of relevance to infectious diseases in Canada. Thus it would serve as a means by which investigators - including Canadian investigators - would make Canadians aware of their research activities and interests. In addition, some observations have a unique significance to Canada (which may compromise publication outside of Canada) but which would remain relevant to Canada. For instance, epidemiologic studies of a specific disease in Canada, such as Legionnaire's disease, may not be perceived outside Canada to be of particular interest or to provide new insights. There are, however, limited data describing regional differences in Legionella pneumophila infection across Canada, and such information is certainly of interest to Canadian practitioners treating infectious diseases. In addition, the Journal should serve as a forum for discussion of controversial issues or statements of positions about all aspects of infectious diseases in Canada. This would include political, economic, and social issues as well as issues relating to universities and medical practice. For the Journal to fulfill these goals will certainly require time and commitment from the editorial board and a demonstration of consistency and reliability to the Canadian and international audience. The years ahead should be exciting for the editorial board and the Canadian infectious diseases community as they observe and, we hope, participate in the Journal's development.

I must acknowledge the support of the publisher, the associate editors, and the editorial board and thank all of the individuals who participated in discussions prior to the establishment of this journal. Thank you, in particular, to contributors who have demonstrated their confidence in the future of the Journal by submitting manuscripts for this inaugural issue. In closing, I would like to invite your participation through submissions, not only of original papers but also of reviews, letters, comments and news.

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