Cruising Speed: Our Journal's 10-Year Voyage

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Published quarterly by Midwest-based health system Advocate Aurora Health and indexed in PubMed Central, the Journal of Patient-Centered Research and Reviews (JPCRR) is an open access, peer-reviewed medical journal focused on disseminating scholarly works devoted to improving patient-centered care practices, health outcomes, and the patient experience.
Happy Birthday, JPCRR! It was a distinct privilege to be asked to write this congratulatory editorial in commemoration of 10 years of publication of Advocate Health’s Journal of Patient-Centered Research and Reviews. Clearly, as evidenced by the impressive contents of this very issue, the “state of the journal” is full steam ahead and right on course toward our north star of highlighting advances in and improving approaches to patient-centered care.

When JPCRR Editor-in-Chief Bruce Morgenstern approached us to scribe a reminiscence of the journal’s first 10 years, it was natural to revisit the lead author’s first and last editorial from his days as the inaugural editor-in-chief. Much has (excitingly) changed, and much has remained the same. The initial beginnings of the journal were certainly humble. Staffing entailed one-fifth of physician Dennis Baumgardner’s time, a very motivated summer research extern, a contracted-by-the-hour managing editor, and a portion of a departmental copy editor. While the first issue was released in both print and digital formats, there was neither an interactive website on which to feature articles nor submission management software to handle new submissions or conduct peer review. There were just copious emails and a paper file for tracking. But, we had a vision.

We saw a multispecialty, multidisciplinary medical journal that would publish original research, interesting reviews, and scholarly treatments of best clinical and educational practice. There is power and huge patient benefit to cross-cutting cooperation and idea-sharing in health care, and we wanted to harness it for our readers. We also had, and still have, a health system willing to support a free, noncommercial, “non-agenda” platform for sharing such publications with all health care providers and patients.

With such simple, if lofty, aims, the first issue was published (despite the naysayers) in early 2014, about 6 months after the journal’s conception. This rapid progress was a tribute to our dedicated core group of editors, reviewers, staff, and engaged institutional executives.1,3 We quickly discovered there was an unquenched thirst for new studies tackling the then-emerging concepts related to patient-centered care. Although one could provide many definitions of “patient-centered,” in our opinion, the most fundamental one regarding a journal article includes the potential to ultimately improve the health of individual patients. Early reader feedback from a mother whose child was correctly diagnosed after she read a JPCRR article that described a similar child’s unusual disorder made all the effort it took to produce JPCRR feel worthwhile.2

Proof of success came from more measurable achievements as well. Article downloads from the journal’s website hosted by Digital Commons rose quickly despite a limited promotional budget. Authors the world over — and, in particular, members of the North American Primary Care Research Group and the Health Care Systems Research Network — recognized the immense value that our burgeoning publication could provide to their works. Before long, thanks largely to our rigorous review process and ever-thorough volunteer peer reviewers, JPCRR was indexed in PubMed Central, Clarivate’s Web of Science, and the Directory of Open Access Journals and had earned an initial Journal Impact Factor™ of 1.7.

Hundreds of articles have contributed to the scientific impact that JPCRR has made over a decade. A few that stand out as especially notable include:

- “An Overview of Cancer Rehabilitation and Exercise in the Literature,”4 published in 2014 and our first article to amass 10,000 full-text downloads;
“Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth: A Case-Based Review,” the most downloaded article from one of the journal’s first theme issues, a 2015 collection focused on novel integrative medicine topics; “Multiple Myeloma Vaccination Patterns in a Large Health System,” to date the most accessed original research article published in JPCRR; “What Outcomes Matter to Patients After Joint or Spine Surgery?” among the most frequently cited articles in recent years as measured by Web of Science’s Emerging Sources Citation Index; and “Calcium Carbonate as a Potential Intervention to Prevent Labor Dystocia,” a 2023 narrative review that was the journal’s most recent to crest 1,000 site downloads, a metric that does not even include the additional 1,000 times readers have requested this article directly from PubMed Central.

A pivotal moment in JPCRR history occurred at the end of 2017, when the journal released the first part of two issues targeting the theme of health disparities and inequity too often prevalent in this country. Editorials from veteran medical education experts like Cynthia Haq, Jacob Bidwell, and David Nelson set the stage for a litany of original research and quality improvement studies that sought to tackle some of these problems. It had become clear to our editorial team that the versatility of JPCRR’s scope made it uniquely capable of filling a variety of conspicuous voids in the medical literature. One of our largest and most diverse issues, released in April 2021, was particularly illustrative of the topical breadth that JPCRR had achieved, led by a CME-offering article authored by Chicoine et al that analyzed the prevalence of common diseases in patients with Down syndrome.

Today, JPCRR continues to disseminate important patient-centered research that has only grown in complexity. See, for instance, the article by Sommers et al on the effects of a patient decision aid for atrial fibrillation ablation on shared decision-making that is also published within this issue. Furthermore, JPCRR continues to demonstrate that even review articles can be patient-centered in spirit. To wit, this issue’s systematic review by Quigley et al investigates how researchers across the United States have implemented patient experience survey data into their studies.

For all of these accomplishments and more, we congratulate the backbone of JPCRR—the curious authors and investigators, the insightful reviewers, the dedicated editors, and the tireless staff, all of whom provided the sweat equity necessary to bring about this 10-year birthday celebration. We happily share this milestone with all the knowledge seekers from around the world who give JPCRR its raison d’être: our readers. This journal has always grown alongside its readership, without which all the indexing, the download metrics, the 40+ issues, the impact factor, and, most of all, the satisfaction we get from knowing that open access publication continues to make a real difference in patient care would not be possible.

On behalf of the entire editorial team, we confidently look forward to a very bright, innovative, and patient- and reader-oriented future.

References

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