Editor's Message

The Dalhousie Medical Journal after 90 years

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The Dalhousie Medical Journal (DMJ) dates back to 1936, when Dalhousie University had just 850 students and 50 medical students per cohort.[1] It was during a Dalhousie Medical Students' Society (DMSS) meeting that a third-year medical student, Isadore Roy Gold, proposed the inception of a student-led medical journal. The DMJ's purpose would be as follows: a) to serve as the official publication of the DMSS; b) to promote undergraduate interest in extra-curricular medical investigation; c) to afford students some training in the preparation and publication of scientific articles; d) to publish articles of interest and value to medical students and alumni; e) to serve as a link between medical alumni, their University, and fellow graduates.[1] Despite initial criticism that such a huge undertaking could not carry on from year to year, the DMJ was established using DMSS money and advertisement revenue as funding.

At first, the Journal was printed three times per year with a broad range of topics, including history papers, research articles, reviews, news, trends, social announcements, tributes, treatments, editorials, and comments on medical education.[1] Early editions were distributed free of charge to medical faculty and students, while the subscription rate for all other medical practitioners was $1.00 per year.[1] Unfortunately, following the outbreak of World War II, publication of the Journal was halted since changes to the medical curriculum "did not leave time for such undertakings", as later noted in a 1954 editorial. [1]

It wasn't until 1954 that the perseverance of H. J. Presutti and I. H. Koven revived the DMJ with the help of the DMSS. In this new era, the Journal's constitution was altered to emphasize the objective of engaging students in scientific writing, encouraging the habit of reading medical material other than assigned textbooks, and increasing the interest of physicians in research at Dalhousie University. For 16 years, the Journal lived up to these objectives, publishing regularly and even reaching a circulation of 2500 copies per issue with international distribution to alumni. Despite these successes, the Journal ceased publication again in 1969 due to insufficient funds from its advertising revenue and a lack of additional funds from the DMSS.[1]

In 1995, the Journal was revived once again by Frank Hassard, Ratika Seth and Christopher Naugler.[2] Up until this point, the Journal consisted of three Co-Editors-in-Chief and a large unspecified number of reviewers, which allegedly made the division of labour highly inefficient. As such, the Editorial Board of 1998 felt that radical changes were required to sustain the evolution of the student Journal. In concurrence with these efforts, a new constitution was ratified to alter the editorial board such that there would be a single Editor-in-Chief along with six editors with distinct positions (i.e., Publication, Reviews, Distribution, Online Edition, Publicity and Finances). In addition, positions such as the Associate Editor of Design and Layout, which oversaw the formatting of each issue, as well as the External Associate Editor-Reviewer position, which expanded the scope of the peer review process to include medical and graduate students from across Canada and the United States, were included. The Faculty Review Board, while no longer in practice, was also created at this time to facilitate the expert peer review of articles submitted to the DMJ.[2]

As the Journal entered the twenty-first century, a number of electronic advancements were made to improve efficiency. In 2001, article reviews became paperless, meaning that for the first time in 65 years, reviews could be sent out, reviewed, and received electronically.[3] The Dalhousie Student Publications Society was also established by Todd Raine (Editor-in-Chief) and the DMSS President to facilitate the Journal's expansion of computer use and technologies. As such, the Publications Society also equipped the DMJ office with two refurbished computers, a scanner, and a fax machine/printer. At this time, a new DMJ website was also established by Neil Isaac, Amy Acker, and Patrick Feltmate, followed by an electronic submission system.[3]

In 2004, the Journal made its debut in emphasizing humanities work. For the first time, the Journal published a series of poems, an official humanities series by Shane Neilson, a member of the medical community who kindly shared his experiences with epilepsy.[4] While the Journal had always welcomed a diverse range of submissions, this publication marked the beginning of a broader editorial scope, with subsequent issues incorporating creative writing and encouraging students to explore the art of medicine.

The twenty-first century also marked a period of experimentation with new initiatives. For instance, in 2007,

the Journal pursued indexing in PubMed, although the effort was ultimately unsuccessful for reasons that remain unclear.[5] Later in 2012, the Editor-in-Chief, Joey Corkum, added three new sections to the Journal: a) Case reports from the MTU, which provided a comprehensive review of a patient's presentation, imaging, diagnosis, and treatment for teaching purposes; b) Diagnose This, which focused on diagnostic imaging with multiple choice options for diagnosis; c) News & Views, which included an opinion piece based on the most controversial topics in medicine.[6] The series went on for several years, but for one reason or another was discontinued in 2019 and subsequently remained unrevived due to the DMJ's significant slowdown in publications during the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, where does the DMJ stand today? As we celebrate our 90th anniversary, the Journal is actively working to return to its regular biannual publication schedule. Just recently, we also strengthened our connections with the DMSS and formally integrated ourselves into their bylaws while retaining self-governance. In October, we will collaborate with the Research in Medicine (RIM) team to create a special DMJ issue showcasing the abstracts of students who presented their work at RIM Launch Week. Throughout this revitalisation, we remain deeply grateful for the Dr. Isadore Roy Gold Endowment for Medical Journalism. Established in 1996 by the Gold family in honour of Dr. Isadore Roy Gold, the Journal's founder and first editor, this funding provides a budget that allows us to continue recognizing our students, reviewers, artists, and editors for their hard work and diligence throughout the publication process.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue. A special thank you is owed to Chester Hewlett for making such a beautiful cover page, showcasing the continuum of medicine from past to present/future. I also want to take this opportunity to introduce our current editorial board, which consists of myself, Radostina Zhekova (Editor-in-Chief), Jonathan Mansvelt (Humanities Editor), MacKayla Williams and Aneisha Taunque (Associate Editors), and Josh McKenna (Layout Editor). As for the incoming editors, I am pleased to welcome Salma Khattab (Humanities Editor), Gracious Kasheke and Truman Wood (Assistant Editors), and Maximilian van Zyl (Layout Editor). To everyone who is seeing our Journal for the first time, we hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we have enjoyed working on it.

1. Hassard, F., Seth, R., Naugler, C. The Dalhousie Medical Journal: Past and Present. DMJ. 1995 Nov;**23**(1):4–5.
2. Williams, B. The Evolution of the Dalhousie Medical Journal. DMJ. 1998 Jun;**26**(1):8.
3. Isaac, N. The Dalhousie Medical Journal - Welcome to the 21st Century!. DMJ. 2001;**29**(1):4.
4. Gofton, T., Rich, K. The 'Art' of Medicine. DMJ. 2004;**32**(1):3.
5. Roberts, D. Enhanced dissemination of medical student research through the DMJ. DMJ. 2007;**34**(3):2.
6. Corkum, J. Editor's Message. DMJ. 2012;**39**(1):4.