



The Role of Resident-Run Orthopaedic Journals in Graduate Medical Education



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Carl Brighton, MD, PhD, 7th Chair of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Pennsylvania, established the University of Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Journal (UPOJ) in 1985, as the nation's first resident-run orthopaedic journal. Over the next 26 years, including this one, the Journal has been published 21 times. Each edition has been managed in its entirety by the orthopaedic surgery residents at the University of Pennsylvania, from fundraising to scientific editing to layout design. Over the last several years, as a result of the dedicated leadership of the Editors-in-Chief, the Journal has expanded to include hardcover editions, online publications, and now has a distribution of over 3,000 copies. This recent expansion of content, distribution, and funding has led to ongoing discussions of possible Medline Indexing as a future goal for this publication. Though this seems like a natural step in the lifespan of a successful journal, many faculty have expressed concern that inclusion in this Index could potentially distance the residents from the editorial process, and hence, disrupt the fundamental goal of this publication—educating residents. This goal begs

the question, what should the purpose be of a resident-run orthopaedic journal?

Dr. Brighton reflected recently on his initial goals for this resident-run publication. He envisioned UPOJ first, and foremost, as a “resident journal”—as a vehicle for residents to learn how to write, edit, and manage, as well as inspire residents to be involved in scientific journals throughout their careers. With this vision, he emphasized learning from the journey, rather than celebrating the destination. Numerous former UPOJ Editors-in-Chief are a testimonial to Dr. Brighton's vision, having gone on to pursue editorial positions in many mainstream orthopaedic journals.

In more recent years, due to an increased desire amongst the residents to be involved, UPOJ has established scientific advisory and financial boards, similar in design to many mainstream journals. Each position on these boards offers an unparalleled educational opportunity to the resident participants. For example, the Editors-in-Chief oversee the entire review process from article submission through publication, and learn valuable leadership skills that help prepare them for a career in the academic world. Additionally, they operate as entrepreneurs, and fund the entire publication process through sponsorship and advertising. They learn valuable time management skills, and learn how to appropriately delegate the workload. Next, the UPOJ scientific board members and peer reviewers critique each scientific article, hone their abilities to critically appraise the literature, and learn to provide constructive feedback to the authors. By participating on the scientific board of UPOJ and learning these key skills, many residents are well poised to enter board positions at mainstream orthopaedic journals upon graduation. Finally, the finance committee plays a critical role in raising funds to be spent by the Board on the UPOJ. Funds raised go to publishing and distributing the journal.

In summary, the goal of publishing a resident-run journal is a pivotal educational opportunity for residents outside the operating room and clinics. As Dr. Brighton reflected, the goals of expanding the journal, indexing it for Medline, and educating residents are not necessarily mutually exclusive. However, to do this, the mission should be to strive for the highest quality publication with the highest level of institutional support in place, in order to preserve the fundamental goal of this publication – as a venue for residents to “practice their hands at being future leaders”.