The American Journal of Physiology Lung Cellular and Molecular Physiology: “The best place to publish basic, translational, and hypothesis-driven clinical lung research”

Sadis Matalon, Editor-in-Chief, American Journal of Physiology Lung Cellular and Molecular Physiology

Departments of Anesthesiology, Physiology and Biophysics, and Environmental Health Sciences, and the Pulmonary Injury and Repair Center, Schools of Medicine and Public Health, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, Alabama

Submitted 7 November 2011; accepted in final form 8 November 2011

I vividly remember hearing of the establishment of the American Journal of Physiology Lung Cellular and Molecular Physiology in 1989. At that time, I was gradually making the switch from exposing animals to hyperoxia and studying physiological adaptations to isolating alveolar epithelial cells and studying cellular and molecular mechanisms of oxygen toxicity. The Journal with Dr. Donald Massaro (one of the most eminent lung biologists) at the helm filled an essential void in the lung community and provided a forum for the publication of high-quality papers on “the broad scope of molecular, cellular, and integrative aspects of normal and abnormal function of cells and components of the respiratory system.” One of the main strengths of this journal has been the excellence of the Editors and their teams. Dr. Donald Massaro, Dr. Eugene Rennels, Dr. Asrar Malik, Dr. Michael Matthay, and their Associate Editors and Editorial Boards consistently improved the journal by ensuring that manuscripts received thoughtful and insightful reviews. They solicited outstanding and timely state-of-the-art reviews that highlighted existing controversies and pointed out how they could be resolved. Under Dr. Matthay’s leadership, the Journal added a “bench to bedside and back to bench” emphasis while retaining its core mission by publishing high-quality articles on every aspect of pulmonary biology. I, like many other scientists, have read every issue for the last 23 or so years and took special pride when one of my articles appeared in the Journal.

I therefore consider it a great honor to be asked to take on the role of Editor-in-Chief of AJP-Lung. My overall objectives for the next three years are 1) to attract high-quality papers describing significant new findings in all aspects of lung cell and molecular biology utilizing both in vitro and in vivo models, 2) to improve the quality of these papers by soliciting and providing authors with careful and thoughtful reviews, 3) to highlight important controversies and invite constructive dialogue on how to resolve them, and 4) to increase the number of submissions from all continents. We are very keen to solicit manuscripts on hypothesis-driven clinical studies on all aspects of pulmonary disease as well as those describing interactions among the pulmonary and systemic diseases.

My first and most important task was to identify an outstanding cadre of Associate Editors who possessed wide scientific and editorial expertise and were willing to spare no effort to achieve these goals. Describing their credentials will clearly take the entire issue so I will simply mention their names and areas of expertise.

- Lorraine B. Ware, M.D. (Vanderbilt University; acute lung injury, translational medicine). Dr. Ware has already served six years as Associate Editor for this Journal and contributed significantly to its success. She will serve as the Senior Associate Editor.
- Rachel C. Chambers, Ph.D. (University College London; lung fibrosis, acute lung injury, matrix biology).
- Lester Kobzik, M.D. (Harvard School of Public Health; epigenetics, environmental physiology, innate immunity).
- Rory E. Morty, Ph.D. (University of Giessen, Germany; acute lung injury, lung development, ion transport).
- Rakesh P. Patel, Ph.D. (University of Alabama at Birmingham; reactive oxygen and nitrogen species, cell signaling, inflammation and endothelial biology).
- Y. S. Prakash, M.D., Ph.D. (Mayo Clinic; airway structure and function, airway smooth muscle, airway diseases, action of anesthetics on airways).
- Kurt R. Stenmark, M.D. (University of Colorado Denver, pulmonary circulation, pulmonary smooth muscle vascular cells, vascular inflammation, vascular mechanics).

It will be a pleasure and privilege to work with this outstanding team of basic scientists and physician scientists who publish extensively on all aspects of basic, translational, and clinical aspects of pulmonary biology and lung disease as well as having impressive records of mentoring young scientists. I will also act as an Associate Editor and handle manuscripts dealing with ion transport, oxidant injury to the alveolar epithelium, pulmonary surfactant, and oxidant-antioxidant balance. Contributors to AJP-Lung may rest assured that their manuscripts will be handled by acknowledged experts in the field.

The Editor and Associate Editors will strive to maintain the high standards established by Dr. Matthay and his Associate Editors. We will also establish some new features as described below:

Accelerated reviews of outstanding papers that received positive reviews by high-impact journals. We encourage authors to submit manuscripts on basic, translational, and hypothesis-driven clinical studies as well as short reports on innovative methods on all aspects of pulmonary research that have received positive reviews by a high-impact journal (arbitrarily defined as a journal with an impact factor >10). An Associate
Editor

Editor and a member of the Editorial Board will evaluate the article and the previous reviews (to be provided by the authors in their entirety) and make a decision within two weeks as to whether to accept the manuscript in its current form, accept it with minor changes, or decline it.

Invited reviews: from the bench to the bedside to the community. We will solicit two reviews per year from authors who have published highly cited articles in AJP-Lung during the last 20 years and will ask them to review the current knowledge on the field, identify gaps in our knowledge, and discuss how their findings translated or show promise of being translated to the bedside and to the benefit of the community.

Invited commentaries on major scientific controversies “Point-Counterpoint” followed by a call for articles on this topic. Topics on which there is significant scientific disagreement (based on solid experimental data) will be identified. We will choose two leading investigators with opposing points of view to contribute short papers briefly summarizing their positions. An Associate Editor will provide a brief summary of key points of disagreement. This new initiative may be coupled with a call for papers on this topic.

Continuation of Editorial Focus. Associate Editors will identify articles to be highlighted based on reviewer comments and their own assessment. All articles (whether or not they have obvious translational implications) will be considered. We will make every attempt to relate current findings to previous work published in AJP-Lung as well as in other journals and will emphasize unanswered questions and translational and clinical implications.

Podcasts. In addition to emphasizing one paper with the Editorial Focus feature, we will also institute a podcast to highlight one to two papers a month among those selected for such by the Associate Editors. These podcasts will be 60 to 90 s in length, may include commentary by the author of the article, and will remain flexible in their content.

Boldly go where no person has gone before. We will actively solicit papers in the areas of 1) lung bioengineering and regenerative medicine, 2) epigenetics of lung disease, 3) interaction of viruses and environmental exposures, and 4) lung imaging. We welcome ideas from our readership for additional areas.

Method papers. We will consider papers (which may not be necessarily hypothesis driven) presenting highly innovative new methods with the potential of facilitating and expanding the capacities of researchers to acquire new data and thus expand our understanding of basic, translational, and clinical knowledge on all areas of lung disease.

We also plan to make some changes in the review process. The Editorial Board will be expanded to about 120 members and will consist of a mixture of established investigators and “new faces” who in a few years will be the leaders in our fields. By effectively utilizing an expanded Editorial Board, we will make every effort to complete all initial reviews within two weeks from the time a manuscript reaches the Editor. We also plan to involve our junior colleagues in the review process. Associate Editors will periodically assign manuscripts to graduate students and postdoctoral as well as clinical fellows ("junior reviewers"), in addition to one or two members of the Editorial Board. The Associate Editor will work closely with the junior reviewers and carefully edit their submitted reviews. This can be a great learning experience for the junior reviewers and will “dedemonize” the review process. In addition, it is the best-kept secret that our junior colleagues often provide the most careful and thoughtful reviews. Please let us know if you would like to be a member of this exciting team. All ideas on how to improve the editorial process are greatly appreciated.

Why Should You Send Your Best Papers to the American Journal of Physiology-Lung Cellular and Molecular Physiology?

Our outstanding team of Associate Editors and Members of the Editorial Board will ensure that each paper receives the best possible review in the shortest possible time. It is my personal experience, shared by the lung community, that papers submitted to this journal always improve in response to constructive comments of the reviewers.

We will not publish incomplete stories, but we will avoid the temptation to ask for multiple additional experiments, completion of which will only marginally improve the message.

We will recognize important contributions, especially when the first author is a junior member of our community, by our monthly podcasts and editorial in focus and will highlight the importance of these findings in clinical practice.

We would like to assure our clinical colleagues that we have the necessary expertise to review hypothesis-driven clinical research and they have a home in AJP-Lung. A number of the Associate Editors are practicing physicians: Dr. Ware is a practicing pulmonologist and critical care physician, Dr. Prakash is an anesthesiologist, Dr. Levine is a specialist in pediatric critical care, Dr. Stemmark is a pediatric pulmonologist, and Dr. Kobzík is a pulmonary pathologist. Two members of the Editorial Board are neonatologists. The rest of the associate editors (Drs. Chambers, Patel, Morty, and Matalon) are basic scientists who constantly try to translate our work to the bedside. Articles reporting hypotheses driven clinical findings will be well received and reviewed properly by experts in their fields.

If you are a basic scientist, please do not be concerned if your article does not have obvious translational or clinical implications. We are committed to publishing solid articles in all aspects of pulmonary physiology and cell biology. All Associate Editors are active scientists and contribute original articles to AJP-Lung and other pulmonary journals. We will make sure that seminal articles are highlighted in several features and point out how conclusions may eventually be translated to the bedside. AJP-Lung has a distinguished tradition for excellence and a lot of articles published many years ago are still cited. Our impact factor will continue to improve as some of these new features are implemented.

From the practical point of view, articles submitted to AJP-Lung are published en bloc, i.e., online supplements (which often make articles more difficult to read) are not needed. In addition, page charges for scientifically necessary color figures are waived if the first or last author is a member of the American Physiological Society. You may save thousands of dollars per article.

I am humbled to follow Dr. Matthay as Editor-in-Chief of AJP-Lung. I have admired his work ever since I was postdoctoral fellow and have benefited by his thoughtful advice and friendship for thirty years. Under his leadership, the quality of AJP-Lung continued to improve considerably and the numbers of submissions has increased. He and his
administrative assistant (Andrew M. Manies) have spared no effort to ensure that the transition has been seamless. Both Dr. Matthy and Dr. Malik will continue to be important members of the family, and their thoughtful advice on editorial and scientific issues will be sought on a regular basis. The Associate Editors and I also acknowledge the many contributions of the previous Associate Editors (Drs. Ware, Christman, Pitt, Schwiebert, Gunst, and Stevens), some of whom have reviewed our papers during the last six years. Their fair, approachable, and level-headed approach created a wonderful team and example to follow. We would like to thank Ms. Rita Scheman, Director of Publications and Executive Editor of the American Physiological Society, and everyone else at APS who have guided a flawless transition and provided us with a wealth of information. Gloria Y. Son (our new Editorial Assistant), the Associate Editors, and I are looking forward to working with them.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and comments, and most importantly, the Associate Editors and I look forward to showing ourselves worthy of this honor and responsibility. *AJP-Lung* will be “The best place to publish basic, translational, and hypothesis-driven clinical lung research.”