EDITORIAL

Editorial Perspective

With this issue a new Editor undertakes responsibility for the form and content of Circulation. In a period of swift change in our society, the accession of a new Editor may be an appropriate occasion to assess the need for a change also in the composition and character of this journal. Dr. Howard Burchell, like those who preceded him, has sought and attained the highest possible standard of excellence in securing and presenting original articles pertinent to diseases of the circulation. It would be temerarious indeed to tamper with excellence on the basis of the all too prevalent, but sophistical concept that change is necessarily progress and, therefore, eminently desirable. Just to maintain the present level of excellence, it would be well to heed the admonition of the red queen that “here you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place.”

But excellence, denoting an exclusive degree of superiority or eminence, is not a state that is restricted to any particular calling or any particular discipline or any limited branch of medical activity. In the field of cardiovascular disease, as in other medical fields, research, education, and patient care are viewed as interdependent elements of a basic triad, each of essential importance. But too often there is a pejorative comparison of clinical to research activities; reports of research are automatically assigned a connotation of excellence whereas those dealing with medical education or clinical activity are deemed to be trivial and relegated to inferior levels of merit. Were the truism not so frequently slighted, it would seem banal to have to remind ourselves that not all that is research is excellent, nor all that is clinical inferior.

It is hoped that Circulation will broaden its content to encompass more articles dealing with clinical problems, teaching articles designed to orient, to clarify, to synthesize, to review, and in the broadest sense to provide continuing education in the field of circulatory diseases and their background—all without debasement of or compromise with the highest standards. The parameters by which excellence is measured are not identical for different disciplines; nor should they be for reports of original research and for articles designed to teach. Although equally high standards will be set for both, the assessment of excellence in each category must be based on somewhat different characteristics.

In seeking a proper mixture of contents for Circulation, it is still necessary to recognize the primary importance of new and important research, even when increasing attention is paid to articles more directly concerned with teaching and patient care. Research remains the foundation of the total structure of medical knowledge and medical practice. The teaching of yesteryear’s cardiology is only of transient interest and value; the vigorous promotion of delivery of health care is laudable only if such care is nurtured and enriched by infusions of new knowledge. Flexner long ago emphasized the impracticality of drawing a line between medical education and medical research; it is similarly impractical to set apart medical care from the medical knowledge that is born of research. There are surely deficiencies in the continuing education of physicians and the delivery of health care, but it would seem fair to say that these deficiencies, at least in most parts of this country, are dwarfed by the gaps in our medical knowledge.

Original articles on cardiovascular research will, therefore, continue to occupy most of the pages of Circulation. But various methods will be employed to enable the clinical cardiologist or internist to find them more comprehensible, more interesting, and more
relevant with respect to the satisfaction of intellectual curiosity and enjoyment, or enrichment of his capabilities as a medical teacher and a medical practitioner. The clinical cardiologist must be stimulated to read the articles reporting original research, although they may often appear technical and abstruse, since they are the basis of his cardiology of tomorrow, just as the familiar cardiology which he practices today depends on the research articles which only yesterday were regarded as recondite and irrelevant.

CIRCULATION is an official journal of the American Heart Association, which is composed of numerous Councils and committees representing a broad cross-section of various divisions of cardiovascular disease. It is the desire of the new Editor to continue to consider the interests of all these groups in the choice of material and to hope, in turn, that they will continue to send reports of their work to CIRCULATION. To the extent that space permits and so long as material is available and meets its standards, CIRCULATION will publish work in the fields of cardiovascular pathology, physiology, pharmacology, biochemistry, radiology, genetics, epidemiology, preventive cardiology, cardiovascular surgery, hypertension, peripheral vascular disease, vascular disease of various organs, and pediatric and adult cardiology, including diagnostic methods and treatment. This listing is not intended to be exclusive, but to indicate, though incompletely, the wide variety of relevant subjects that may be considered for publication.

The study of cardiovascular disease is undergoing fragmentation into many subdivisions analogous to the fractionation of internal medicine into its subspecialties. Some of the cardiovascular subdivisions are becoming so specialized and technical, or even esoteric, that they may well deserve journals of their own. For the present, CIRCULATION intends to provide a balanced presentation of the various subdivisions of cardiovascular disease in the hope that each issue will contain something of interest and value to all readers.

This commentary on editorial intent should not be interpreted as a promise of revolutionary change in form or content. Those who like CIRCULATION "as it is" should find no difficulty in identifying the well-known features of its erudite scholarship. But the reader may also properly infer that a policy of flexibility will be emphasized. Changes in form and content may be freely essayed when they appear reasonable and worthy of trial and, if indicated, abandoned readily or altered again as experience enjoins.

The contents of a journal are often cast into a rigid mold by established policy. Emphasis, perhaps overemphasis, on a special subject leads to publication of many articles on that subject. A journal, like a character actor, may become typed and labeled as the appropriate repository for that subject. Authors who have seen their own articles or those of others on a given subject previously published in a journal continue to send similar material to the same journal, whereas other subjects of equal interest and value for the same reason are submitted elsewhere. To the extent that CIRCULATION has been similarly characterized, every effort will be made to obliterate or neutralize such restricted characterization. Within the framework of cardiovascular disease, there is no type of contribution that will be consistently preferred, and none that will be consistently ignored because of the subject with which it deals. Originality, validity, importance, interest, and clarity of communication are some of the major determinants for acceptance of submitted articles.

To a variable degree the character of a journal is molded by the character of its editor, and undoubtedly this applies also to CIRCULATION. But for CIRCULATION at least, its character is determined chiefly by 1) the investigators and scholars who submit reports of their work and knowledge for publication and 2) the Board of Editors and other reviewers who carefully appraise these reports, recommend priorities for publication, and, most important, make valuable criticisms, corrections, and suggestions which almost always enhance the scientific merit and clarity of the presentation.
Circulation has attained must be credited to the distinguished list of previous editors who attracted some of the most able investigators and scholars in cardiovascular disease to submit the best of their own work and to serve as reviewers of the work of others. Although Circulation cannot deny that it will continue to regard with favor manuscripts submitted by prominent investigators with established reputations for originality and high scientific quality, it also proclaims an avid desire for contributions from new and younger investigators with fresh ideas, exploring untrodden areas of research, who will be the prominent investigators of tomorrow. But whether manuscripts are submitted by the famous or the unknown, they will be referred for similar careful review and must meet the same standards of excellence.

Ultimately, the character and even the existence of a journal are determined by its readers. If it is valid to conclude from history that a physician's position in society is established not by the physician, himself, but by the society he serves, then it may be equally valid to suggest that the position of a journal is likewise established by the readers it serves. Circulation will seek to serve as broad a readership as possible of those interested in cardiovascular disease, regardless of their major skill or degree of specialization, who have a common high motivation to be informed accurately regarding new and important developments. For its part Circulation recognizes its responsibility to determine and publish such material as is needed and is appropriate for its readers and even, without apology, that which is useful and relevant, provided it is original, scientifically accurate, scholarly, and intelligible. It should constantly survey the horizon for the broad developments in medical fields that bear on cardiovascular disease and attempt to predict the trends in cardiovascular research and practice which may provide the physician with an insight into cardiology of the future. From its readers, in turn, Circulation hopes to retain their continued interest and loyalty and welcomes any suggestions which will help it to serve them more creatively, more fruitfully, and more effectively.

Charles K. Friedberg
Editorial Perspective
CHARLES K. FRIEDBERG

Circulation. 1971;43:3-5
doi: 10.1161/01.CIR.43.1.3
Circulation is published by the American Heart Association, 7272 Greenville Avenue, Dallas, TX 75231
Copyright © 1971 American Heart Association, Inc. All rights reserved.
Print ISSN: 0009-7322. Online ISSN: 1524-4539

The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is located on the World Wide Web at:
http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/43/1/3.citation

Permissions: Requests for permissions to reproduce figures, tables, or portions of articles originally published in Circulation can be obtained via RightsLink, a service of the Copyright Clearance Center, not the Editorial Office. Once the online version of the published article for which permission is being requested is located, click Request Permissions in the middle column of the Web page under Services. Further information about this process is available in the Permissions and Rights Question and Answer document.

Reprints: Information about reprints can be found online at:
http://www.lww.com/reprints

Subscriptions: Information about subscribing to Circulation is online at:
http://circ.ahajournals.org//subscriptions/