



Editorial

Public Health Nutrition (PHN) has come a very long way since its first issue in 1998, when its founders Barrie Margetts and Lenore Arab wisely saw the need for a journal dealing with nutrition and health on a population level. Under the stewardship of Professor Margetts and subsequently Professor Agneta Yngve (now continuing on as Deputy Editor), our total circulation has grown to 8040, with readers all over the world currently downloading over 54000 full-text articles per month. Our impact factor rose from 1.858 in 2007 to 2.169 in 2011, and the number of submissions we receive increased from 465 in 2007 to >850 in 2012.

These statistics are not a reason for self-congratulation, but a basis for self-inspection, to answer the question: are we doing what we need to do to disseminate important information in a timely manner? In bridging the worlds of public health and nutrition, the journal has clearly filled an important niche. We have published seminal articles on the nutrition transition, the validation of dietary assessment methodologies and on built and food environments, as well as key reviews in nutritional epidemiology. Our articles continue to encompass a wide range of topics: from monitoring and surveillance to public policy; from methodology in dietary and anthropometric assessments to workforce development; from nutritional epidemiology to interventions, at local and national levels. In addition to nutrition, dietetics and epidemiology, the articles represent expertise in the fields of communication, psychology, geography and economics. More recently, we have encouraged and included articles on environment and sustainability, as these are food system issues of critical and immediate importance to public health.

Whether we are doing this in a timely manner is another question. In 2012, our median time from submission to first decision was 61 d, ~10 d less than the median of the previous year, but still leaving room for improvement. The ability to publish articles online has hastened readers' access to accepted manuscripts before they appear in print. But given the immediacy of some emerging issues – for example, articles with some bearing on policies under consideration – reducing the time between submission and decision will be a priority in the coming year. It is worth pointing out that our editorial board, including the Editor-in-Chief, Deputy Editors and

Associate Editors, as well as all reviewers for *PHN*, work on a voluntary basis. When not working on journal matters, we are working on ... well, public health nutrition.

'Timeliness' also refers to whether we are adequately anticipating the issues that lie ahead. Trends in submissions serve as a rough gauge of where concerns might be headed. While it is clear that the topics of infant feeding, malnutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, socio-economic factors and the nutrition transition continue to be of concern, we have seen a striking increase in the number of papers dealing with childhood and adolescent nutrition and obesity, food labelling, marketing, food insecurity and food environments. I expect that we will begin to see other issues increasingly represented in the journal as well – for example, more articles on the 'environment', variously defined: food environments described in geographic, social and economic terms; how such environments are shaped by the food industry and by governmental policies; how individuals make dietary decisions within their given environments; climate change, ecosystem degradation and peak oil effects on food production; and the effects of modern food production systems on food safety as well as on our environment.

To a large extent, it is you – as readers of and contributors to *PHN* – who determine the direction of this journal, by the articles you read and the manuscripts you submit. *PHN* reflects where our common, collective concerns lie and where we are looking for solutions. At the same time, however, it is our responsibility to identify and bring attention to emerging issues that are not yet on our general radar, and to serve as a tipping point for useful ideas. And as always, we will continue to publish original, important and scientifically sound articles of relevance to public health nutrition researchers, practitioners and policy makers, while maintaining the highest standards of editorial integrity.

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