Challenges, Strengths, and Vision for the Future

As editor-in-chief of the *Canadian Journal of General Internal Medicine (CJGIM)* for just over six months, it has been my pleasure to get to know and work alongside our deputy editors, Drs. Rodrigo Cavalcanti, Ameen Patel, and John You, the Journal Editorial Board, and the excellent staff at the Canadian Society of Internal Medicine (CSIM). I have also had the opportunity to reflect on the *Journal’s* challenges and strengths, and wish to share with you our views on this and what our plans are for CJGIM – your Journal.

Let’s start with the challenges. There are thousands of medical journals in circulation, which begs the question: what does the CJGIM add to this already cluttered journalistic landscape? Is the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* or the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, among other journals, not enough to reflect scholarship and practice issues relevant to our specialty in Canada? An outside critic might argue that the CJGIM adds little of substance and kills swaths of trees in the process. Furthermore, the CJGIM is not yet indexed by the U.S. National Library of Medicine. So why do we exist? The answer to this question is plain in my mind but for others it could be found during the recent CSIM meeting. The meeting took place at the spectacular Banff Centre for the Arts surrounded by the majesty of the Rocky Mountains. Against this idyllic backdrop, what was more noticeable, however, was the high level of the lectures and small group interactive sessions, genuine collegiality between young and old(er!) peers, and infectious enthusiasm of the attendees. The high level of scholarship shown by the trainees in developing and presenting their research was impressive. Clearly, our peer group deserves to be heard, not only to showcase the scholarship on display at our society’s annual conference, but to provide a broader voice to issues specific to our burgeoning specialty in Canada, currently not provided by other journals. We do acknowledge the need for indexing status and we are working towards this (see below).

The strengths of CJGIM, however, go beyond just providing a voice for general internists in Canada. Much scholarship and related thoughtful work by our peers goes largely unnoticed and deserves to be disseminated. Some exist in annual rounds presentations, particularly by late-career, practicing clinicians and university faculty. In addition, early career general internists and aspiring clinician investigators need a vehicle to showcase their clinical acumen, dedication to local quality of care improvement, global health initiatives, and original research. The Journal should provide a springboard for such ventures. Finally, a space is needed to recognize “thoughtfulness,” whether manifesting as interpretations of contemporary issues (e.g., gender equity, opioid crisis, physician burnout), literary expression (e.g., poetry, non-fiction writing), or observations of daily clinical practice.

What, then, is our vision for the future of the Journal? Our short- to medium-term aim is to increase awareness of the CJGIM and to encourage submissions from our specialty. First, we are asking our Editorial Board to solicit articles from colleagues and other contacts. We have also reached out to Chairs of Medicine to identify medical grand rounds topics, typically done by late-career colleagues that could be readily crafted into a commentary, perhaps in partnership with an early career colleague. To this end we have created a new section of the Journal titled “Chair’s Medical Grand Rounds Across Canada.” These topics would focus on important, potentially controversial but top-of-mind issues for our specialty. Second, reflecting an increasingly image-oriented practice, we are starting a section on “Images in Clinical Practice” to encourage submission of photographs and other diagnostic images accompanied by a short clinical narrative. Third, we are focusing on our emerging and early career colleagues to encourage them at the annual CSIM meetings and elsewhere to submit their work to CJGIM. The process of converting a poster or oral presentation into a written manuscript teaches how to convey and articulate concepts and thinking in a clear, succinct manner. Fourth, we will be engaging colleagues in point-counterpoint or debate-style discussions, which are always of interest. Fifth, we are creating a new section on the humanistic elements of our practice, capitalizing on the hidden artistic talents of our colleagues. Finally, we are increasing our social medial presence through Twitter and will request selected authors to provide short, 2–3 minute, videos summarizing their work that can be posted on YouTube.

Our medium- to long-term aim is to achieve indexed status with the U.S. National Library of Medicine and obtain an impact factor. Reaching this goal will, without doubt, increase the number of submissions to the *Journal*. Ideally, we want to make CJGIM a desired destination for scholarship and thoughtful commentary as it relates to general internal medicine. Other long-term aims include stimulating discussion and scholarship around emerging areas that will affect our practice such as competency-based medical education, artificial intelligence, and use (and misuse) of big data.

On behalf of the deputy editors, I look forward to promoting scholarship, thoughtful reflection, and humanism relating to general internal medicine through the CJGIM – your Journal. Please join us in this venture. And by the way, CJGIM is now fully electronic, so we are saving a few more trees.

James Douketis MD
Editor-in-Chief, Canadian Journal of General Internal Medicine