Editorial

From the Desk of the Editor-in-Chief

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J Gastrointestinal Abdominal Radiol ISGAR 2018;1:3–4

INAUGURARE

… to unveil … to usher in …

“For the beginning is thought to be more than half of the whole, and many of the questions we ask are cleared up by it. We must presumably first sketch it roughly, and then later fill in the details… for any one can add what is lacking.”

Aristotle–on Beginnings: circa 335-323 B.C.1

For the Journal of Gastrointestinal and Abdominal Imaging ISGAR (if we are to believe Aristotle), this inaugural issue is not just a beginning… it is more than half of the whole. Many of the questions we ask about this journal will be answered simply by virtue of a beginning… sketched roughly now, later to be filled-in with details… because (apparently) “anyone can add what is lacking…”

So, like sweet Pollyanna, we shall merrily go forth to sketch this beginning with a light hand, confident that the worldwide abdominal imaging community will, in the fullness of time, color in the rich details. At the cusp of any change, it is prudent to view, Janus-like, the future and the past. Beginnings are, after all, a time for retrospection and resolution… for bombast and simplicity… for questioning, “Can we... should we...?” even as we pull up anchor and set sail shouting “Why ever not!”

As scientists, we have a rich heritage of scientific writing, spanning 350 years. In 1665 the “The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge” published the first edition of its “Philosophical Transactions,” considered to be the first scientific periodical (►Fig. 1). It was overseen by the Society's Secretary, Henry Oldenburg, possibly the first ever Editor-in-Chief, who managed the correspondence. This first edition and, unbelievably, every single issue thereafter, is held in the Royal Society of London Academy Library and Archives. A beautiful sepia-toned cover page firmly sets out its intent as “…giving some accompt (archaic English for “account”) of the present Undertakings, Studies, and Labors of the Ingenious in many considerable parts of the world…” This first journal had a very simple aim: to update its readers of inspired and ground-breaking research from all over the world… and so was born, without any further ado, pomp, or circumstance, the practice of publishing what is interesting, true, and worthy, as determined by a group of scientific peers.

Nearly two centuries later, in 1843 and across the pond, The New England Quarterly Journal of Medicine and Surgery was published under the editorship of Charles E. Ware and Samuel Parkman in Boston. It was here that the world learned of “The Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever,” from Oliver Wendell Holmes. In 1846, The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal ran a short communication from John C. Warren entitled “Inhalation of Ethereal Vapor for the Prevention of Pain in Surgical Operations.” Infectious disease and surgical anesthesia, the cornerstones of modern medicine, reached the world through the judicious publication of these discoveries.

But let us not be lulled by this sepia-tinted and rosy retrospection… Editors and Reviewers both then, and now, are damned
Yet continue our work without complaint…

Or watch our Society or our Journal be splintered
Twisted by others to mislead the innocents,
If we can bear to read our own article,
And treat those two messengers just the same;
If we can face Acceptance and Rejection
If we can publish—and not make publishing our aim;
If we can research and not make research our master,
And not the hollow hurrahs of our fellow man!
If Discovery can be our incentive
being of our patients,
If we can study for the sake of Study and Truth and the well-
And reveal flaws and biases likewise.
If we can report observations truthfully, concisely and
Test hypothesis without concern for prize,
If we can gather data without compromise,
Test hypothesis without concern for prize,
If we can report observations truthfully, concisely and elegantly,
And reveal flaws and biases likewise.
If we can study for the sake of Study and Truth and the well-being of our patients,
If Discovery can be our incentive
And not the hollow hurrahs of our fellow man!

If we can research and not make research our master,
If we can publish—and not make publishing our aim;
If we can face Acceptance and Rejection
And treat those two messengers just the same;
If we can bear to read our own article,
Twisted by others to mislead the innocents,
Or watch our Society or our Journal be splintered
Yet continue our work without complaint…

If we can tackle our decades of work and learning,
And risk it on a good cause…
And lose, and start again at the beginning,
And never speak about what we lost.
If we can force the Liver, Gut and Kidneys
To reveal what they jealously hide,
And cling to our mouse with nothing left
But the will to survive.
If we can speak at annual conferences,
Chat with doyens and the quiet ones,
If neither friends nor rivals can hurt us,
If every member matters but no one too much,
If we can fill the hour
With sixty minutes of Abdomen, Pelvis and Perineum…
Ours is the World and everything that's in it,
And—what is more—this will be our JGAR everyone!

If: a Parody
...with apologies to Rudyard Kipling

References
1 Marta MM. A brief history of the evolution of the medical research article. Clujul Med 2015;88(4):567–570
3 Aristotle Metaphysics. Book I, 1098a–b; §7 as translated by W. D. Ross