Letter From the
Founding Editor-in-Chief

Reflections on the 10th Anniversary of the Journal

James M. Perrin, MD, Founding Editor-in-Chief

The end of 10 years as Editor-in-Chief of *Ambulatory Pediatrics* provides me some perspective on the growth of the journal and the Academic Pediatric Association (APA) over this decade. During my time on the board of the APA (chair of the Public Policy Committee and the Research Committee at different times), I had reluctantly supported the notion that the APA should have an official journal, although I voted against an independent journal—instead believing that the APA would be best served through linking with an ongoing successful journal. The APA had some discussions with one of the key pediatric journals at the time but decided against a relationship because that journal would not allow the APA to have any role in the choice of new editors and for concerns about other sponsors of that journal. The board then voted to pursue an independent path, including possibilities of assuming oversight for an ongoing journal or developing a new journal.

As president of the APA, I had hoped to focus on ways to expand policy activities through the association, but found instead that the board’s decision to pursue a journal fell into my lap! Bob Haggerty chaired the editorial search committee for the APA board, and I was fortunate to be the committee’s choice. We had a series of discussions at that time with a relatively new pediatric journal, but those discussions ended because of issues again of the APA role in selecting the editor and because of concerns about the financial viability of that journal. As the APA then pursued its independent course, a couple of presidents of the American Academy of Pediatrics with ties to the APA encouraged a “middle ground”—where the APA journal would be published as a supplement to *Pediatrics*, with the supplements edited by an editor appointed by the APA. This arrangement with *Pediatrics* greatly benefited the APA in the first 2 years of its journal and provided excellent exposure through the large *Pediatrics* subscriber network. After 2 years of the *Journal of the Ambulatory Pediatric Association* as a supplement to *Pediatrics*, the APA forged ahead with its own fully independent journal, *Ambulatory Pediatrics*. A number of people played critical roles during this time—perhaps most especially Judy Shaw, who served as a superb negotiator, effective in placing the association’s needs well in front in the move to an independent operation.

In the early years, senior editorial staff—fortified by pastries from one of New England’s best small bakeries nearby—met monthly to discuss difficult papers, consider how best to choose emphases for the journal, what special sections we should have, and the myriad of questions to answer in starting a new journal. These discussions greatly benefited from the wisdom and the teamwork of Steve Gortmaker, Larrie Greenberg, Charlie Homer, Marie McCormick, and Ben Siegel—heady times in developing the journal. The journal was ahead of its time from the very beginning in insisting on electronic submission and review.

The journal benefited from a number of changes and milestones. It achieved indexing in *Index Medicus* after only 4 issues. The changing of the editorial guard with new associate editors (John Co, Karen Kuhlthau, and Joe Lopreiato) added new strengths and ideas to the work, followed by the addition of several new sections: Book Reviews led by Ruth Etzel, a section on personal narratives directed by Anjali Jain and John Andrews, and the recent start of a series of perspectives that Elena Fuentes-Afflick has built. The move to a new publisher occurred fairly painlessly, and Elsevier has greatly expanded the market for *Ambulatory Pediatrics* and added numerous strategies for the journal’s growth and expansion. Through much of the last several years, Sheila Bloom has served as the journal’s editorial associate, ably tracking manuscripts, editorial information, and journal progress.

Over the decade, the journal has published over 400 original articles as well as an additional 48 original articles in supplements. We have had 6 annual reports on children’s health care quality, utilization, and expenditures; 32 commentaries; 16 personal narratives; 5 perspectives; and numerous book reviews and letters to the editor. The annual reports, much of the analyses for which the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality generously supports, have had particular success as among the most-referenced and downloaded publications in the journal.

Early in the development of the journal, I met with Suzanne Fletcher, who was a founding editor of the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* (JGIM). She commented that JGIM had become the storehouse and compendium of the work that academic general internists did—and it helped general internists explain to their department chairs (and a broader audience) the intellectual and scientific base for their work. We believe that *Ambulatory Pediatrics*...
has had the same value and impact for general academic pediatrics—offering a clear presentation of the breadth of general academic pediatric work that helps faculty establish their credibility and encourage younger converts to the field.

Where have we excelled over the past several years? _Ambulatory Pediatrics_ has become the leading journal in pediatric education research. One of the early supplements to the journal came from the Faculty Scholars Program, led by Lucy Osborn. It helped, along with published guidance from Larrie Greenberg and Ben Siegel, to clarify the types of educational research we hoped to publish—and that has led to a steady stream of excellent work in pediatric education. The journal also serves as the premier site for pediatric health services and health policy research and for papers on research methods. It publishes strong, interesting articles in the diverse content areas of academic general pediatrics, including primary care, emergency pediatrics, hospital medicine, child behavior and development, mental health, chronic conditions, adolescent medicine, child abuse, patient safety, obesity, insurance, immunizations, advocacy, and pediatric environmental health. The journal also encourages studies using qualitative methods and has clear expertise in evaluating qualitative studies and their appropriateness for publication. It has indeed become a comprehensive compendium of what academic general pediatricians do, and it has enhanced the science of general pediatrics.

The change of the journal name (with this issue) to _Academic Pediatrics_ appropriately recognizes that much of the new and exciting work carried out by investigators in general academic pediatrics does not fit the usual bounds of “ambulatory care.” Furthermore, many of our members and colleagues in other countries have little understanding of the term _ambulatory_. These and other changes with a new editor bode well for the future. Making the journal more interactive with its readers—maximizing the opportunities arising with the information revolution—will open new approaches.

Fifteen years ago, the APA and its membership debated the value of a journal and whether the existing journal could well serve members’ needs. I was among the skeptics then about whether the association should take this step. With 10 years of editing the APA journal, my sense is that we have had much more success than we had thought possible—a place for the good scholars in academic pediatrics (from educators to health policy workers and advocates) to publish their work and a source for investigators seeking information on recent research in general pediatrics. With many good partners and the strong support of the board and the membership, the journal has thrived and filled an important niche in pediatric publications.

**REFERENCES**