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# Scientific Editor Transitions

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# Disclosures

- This session was developed by editors of the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*
- There are no financial conflicts of interest

# Overall Objectives

1. Discuss benefits of long-term editor transition/succession plans
2. Describe best practices for scientific editor/editor-in-chief transition planning
3. List key elements of an effective editor succession plan
4. Offer practical advice for getting started on succession planning

# About the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*

- Peer-reviewed, editorially independent journal published by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME); inaugural issue September 2009
- Aims:
  - Disseminate research/scholarship in graduate medical education
  - Practical information for program and institutional leaders
  - Focus on educational innovations, novel approaches, and best practices
- Bimonthly (6x per year, Feb, April, June, July, Oct, Dec)
- Hard copy direct mailed to 11,000+ program directors, DIOs, and faculty of accredited institutions; additional US and international institutional and individual subscriptions

# About the *Journal*

- ~ 30-member Editorial Board
  - Editor-in-Chief, 3 Deputy Editors
  - Associate Editors
  - Rotating Resident Editors
  - Current Editor-in-Chief is the “founding editor,” hired June 2010
    - Internist/geriatrician in academic practice
    - Support at part FTE commitment
  - 3 yearly conference calls; 1 face-to-face meeting
- Journal Oversight Committee
  - ACGME governing board subcommittee
  - Meets during ACGME Board meetings

# About the Journal

- Website: [www.jgme.org](http://www.jgme.org)
  - Select open-access content for each issue; all content open after 1 year
  - Online early articles
  - Hot Topics (curated materials in areas of interest to readers)
  - Resident *JGME*
- Social Media
  - Twitter: @JournalofGME
  - LinkedIn: Journal of Graduate Medical Education
  - YouTube: /JournalofGME

# Editor Transition Situation

- “Baby boomer” editor-in-chief approaching a decade in his/her role
- Retirement impending in the next 5 to 7 years
- Annual “ever-green” contract; no formal editor “term limit”
- No major change planned in journal editorial orientation or policy
- 3 Deputy Editors, but no formal succession plan, and no contingency plan in case the editor becomes ill or otherwise unable to carry out duties

# Editor Transition Situation (cont.)

- No major change in Journal editorial policy is planned, prefer natural evolution
- Journal doing well with social media, would like some new ideas and editorial direction
  - Projecting a journal look and image to appeal to younger readers
  - Enhance online and interactive function materials
  - Increase editorial board diversity
- Would like successor to be similar, somewhat “younger” individual
- **No** transition plan



# What to Avoid: A Leadership Vacuum

- Scientific editors will inevitably leave office, and some journals do not have longer-term transition or succession plans for these roles
- Learning from other industries
  - Annually 10% to 15% of organizations appoint a new leader due to incumbent resignation, retirement, or illness
  - Many unprepared: only 54% are grooming successor; 39% had no viable internal candidate
  - The longer it takes a company to name a new leader during a succession crisis, the worse it subsequently performs
- Scientific editor searches can be time-consuming and costly, with no guarantee of success
- “Scary” tales of the occasional journal with several scientific editor changes in a single year

# 12 Elements of an Effective Transition/Succession Plan

1. Start by formally defining an approximate “term limit” and succession planning expectations as part of the contract early (ideally with the incumbent editors starting contract)
2. Establish oversight and involvement for transition/succession planning: who discusses succession planning with the editor, who has oversight (eg, an Oversight Board, the Member Organization’s Board)
3. Set a succession time frame: at least 4 to 5 years ahead of an anticipated transition
4. Establish editor performance expectations and success factors, and conduct an annual evaluation of the editor

# 12 Elements of an Effective Transition/Succession Plan

5. Establish a written succession plan that details how the successor candidates will be chosen and the respective roles of the oversight body, the current editor, and other individuals in this process
6. Conduct a detailed assessment of the knowledge, skills, capabilities, and performance of senior editorial board member and identify high-performing candidates
7. Select 2 to 3 successor candidates, and give them a formal contingency role (in case of editor's illness or absence); make them part of a succession plan
8. Develop candidates' leadership skills; formal mentoring by editor-in-chief incumbent, managing editor, other mentors

# 12 Elements of an Effective Transition/Succession Plan

9. Put promising individuals in charge of a journal section or projects to develop their skills and test their suitability for editor-in-chief role and add value for the journal (provide small stipend for added role)
10. Establish temporary contingency plans, in case of illness or other absence of the editor, and emergency succession procedures to ensure continuous operation of the journal
11. Design an onboarding process for all editorial board members, as well as key elements of editor onboarding
12. View transition/succession as a process, not an event, including leveraging the wisdom and experience of the outgoing editor (consider pros and cons of formally keeping the incumbent on in an editor emeritus role)

# Flexible Elements: Mix and Match to Meet Your Journal's Needs

- Treat the 12 elements as a flexible “cafeteria” style plan
- You may only be interested in the contingency/emergency transition option to ensure journal editorial continuity in case of illness
- Can apply many of the elements in situations where the new scientific editor is chosen from “outside”
- Encourage some transition conversations for journal oversight body, even if no formal succession plan is put into place
  - Benefit of periodic assessment of editor/journal performance
  - Assess “currency” of editorial direction, given the rapid evolution in scientific fields, editorial and journal practices, and reader needs and preferences

# Succession Planning Takes Years, Not Months: Getting Started at *JGME*

- Starting early, eg, 2017 for a transition planned for 2022 or 2023
- Reaffirming the role of the Journal Oversight Committee in editor selection (she is the “founding” editor-in-chief), and expand the role to engagement in succession planning
- Developing a formal contingency plan in case the editor is ill or not able to carry out her duties
- 2017-2018 amended contract to build in a term limit, and succession planning responsibility
- Assess *JGME/ACGME* capacity for mentoring editor-in-chief candidates and look for added resources
- Affirm our appreciation for the current editor-in-chief and all she does for the journal

# Thank you!

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