

The RSNA Editorial Fellowship

The Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), through the RSNA Editorial Fellowship, is giving radiologists who have 3 to 5 years of experience at the attending-physician level the opportunity to learn what a journal editor does.

For this article I interviewed the editors of RSNA's two peer-reviewed journals, two former fellows, and RSNA's assistant executive director of publications and communications to obtain background on the fellowship and advice on how to duplicate this successful program.

RSNA was established in 1915 and now has more than 32,000 members. In 1998, the RSNA Publications Council and Committee on International Relations and Education (CIRE) launched the fellowship on the recommendation of Anthony V Proto, editor of RSNA's scientific journal, *Radiology*. William W Olmsted, editor of RSNA's educational journal, *RadioGraphics*, said that "there was a perceived need to educate midcareer radiologists in the techniques of scientific editing and manuscript review."

A fellowship candidate must be a member of RSNA, have 3 to 5 years of attending-level experience at an academic institution, and have served as a reviewer for a major imaging journal. A candidate living outside North America must be affiliated with a national radiology society in his or her own country. "Typically, the applicants have had extensive experience with reviewing for journals. Some applicants also are journal editors", Proto added.

An applicant provides a curriculum vitae, a personal statement describing his or her objectives in radiology journalism, and three letters of reference. Proto, Olmsted, a member of the RSNA Publications Council, and the chair of CIRE select one candidate for the month-long program, which can be broken into segments of time throughout the course of the year.

RSNA provides a \$10,000 stipend, which covers travel expenses, meals, and hotel accommodations.

The Fellowship Experience

A fellow spends 3 days in the RSNA



Radiology editor Anthony V Proto discusses a submitted manuscript with 1998 RSNA Editorial Fellow Donald P Rush at

offices in Oak Brook, Ill, getting an overview of the publication process and of how the offices of the two RSNA journals work together to bring a submitted manuscript to publication. Theodore T Miller, the 2001 RSNA fellow, said he observed aspects of manuscript preparation by following the path that a manuscript takes once it arrives in Oak Brook. He learned about electronic publishing, advertising, marketing, circulation, and copyright and permissions. Miller is chief of musculoskeletal radiology at North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System and an associate professor of clinical radiology at the New York University School of Medicine.

RSNA's assistant executive director of publications, Roberta E Arnold, said the visit is mutually beneficial. "The staff here can test program ideas with the fellow", she said. "For example, when we considered sending electronic proofs to authors instead of hard copies, we pilot tested the format with some fellows, who gave us excellent feedback."

The RSNA fellow spends 2 weeks with Proto at the *Radiology* offices in Richmond, Va. "After an overview of processes in the editorial office, the philosophy of the journal, and scientific conduct, the fellow spends a substantial amount of time reviewing current manuscripts", Proto said. Later, the fellow works several hours a day with Proto in evaluating manuscripts. Other activities include tracking manuscripts, evaluating the adequacy of revisions made by an author, reviewing guidelines for cropping images, and observing the print-

ing of a scientific journal.

The fellow spends 3 days with Olmsted at *RadioGraphics* in Bethesda, Md. Olmsted describes this part of the fellowship as “a dialogue about the processes of editing”.

The final week of the fellowship is spent at the RSNA scientific assembly and annual meeting in Chicago taking part in the selection of material and attending meetings of the editorial boards of the journals.

After the fellowship, the fellow writes an appraisal and offers suggestions for improvements. The 2001 fellow, Miller, said he learned how to look at manuscripts critically and now teaches this important skill to his residents.

The 1999 RSNA editorial fellow, Douglas S Katz, said that “the fellowship allowed me to become a better author and reviewer and to appreciate the demands on an editor. I have tried to be even fairer in my reviewing and convey in my reviews what the editor and authors need to know to improve the manuscripts.” Katz is vice-chair of clinical research and education and the director of Body CT at Winthrop University Hospital in Mineola, New York. He is an associate professor of clinical radiology at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. As a result of the fellowship, he conducted a research project on peer review with Proto and Olmsted, which he presented at the 2001 International Congress on Peer Review in Barcelona, Spain. His study is being evaluated for possible publication.

Olmsted said the program has multiple benefits. “The fellows gain insight into what makes a manuscript stronger and how the system works at RSNA. As an editor, I enjoy working with these bright radiologists. They ask interesting questions and frequently make me rethink my views”, he said.

Arnold said one ideal outcome for RSNA is the establishment of a base of potential future editors for RSNA publications when the current editors retire.

Challenges

All those involved in the fellowship call it

a positive experience, but there are challenges. Proto said, “The biggest challenge I have experienced is coordinating the daily activities of the editorial office to make sure that a substantial amount of time is set aside daily to spend with the fellow. I try to complete as much work as possible before the fellow’s arrival.”

Miller’s biggest challenge was keeping up with the sheer volume of work. “Before the fellowship, my reviews typically took 7 to 10 hours and included literature searches and reference checks”, he said. He observed the speed with which Proto and his staff conducted reviews and was challenged to keep up with them.

Establishing Other Fellowship Programs

Arnold said planning is the key for other medical societies interested in setting up similar programs. “You have to think very carefully about your goals and consider what you would ask of your candidates, what you would expose them to, and how you would evaluate outcomes.” Katz said a successful program requires “coordination on the part of many individuals, a highly motivated editorial office, the proper materials to teach the fellow, and the financial resources to fund such a program.” Miller encourages duplications of this program. “You’ll create the next generation of editorial physicians. Your fellows will use what they learn for the betterment of their academic societies and society.”

Additional information on the RSNA Editorial Fellowship can be found at www.rsna.org/publications/editorial_fellowships.html.

MARILYN IDELMAN SOGLIN is a contributing writer to RSNA News.