

Editing and Education

by Catherine Meyer and Richard M Glass

JAMA's Fishbein Fellowship

physicians the opportunity, at JAMA, to learn from various staff members the array of skills involved in the publication of a medical journal—from recruitment, selection, and review of manuscripts to editing, proofreading, and layout. She envisioned this as a way to promote staff cohesiveness and to groom future physician editors for JAMA and other medical journals. Southgate was able to use the money that Fishbein had left for this purpose, and in 1977 the fellowship was established.

Although some aspects of the fellowship experience have changed during the years since then, much is now as it was in the beginning. The fellowship continues to provide exposure to all aspects of editing of a medical journal. Fellows still learn copyediting under the supervision of a senior manuscript editor. They attend the two weekly manuscript meetings where articles that will eventually be published are presented and discussed. They also participate in the weekly makeup and review session where forthcoming issues are subjected to a final reading by senior editorial staff.

The fellow is responsible for the Contempo Updates section of the journal (which contains brief review articles on contemporary scientific and clinical topics) and chooses the subjects, recruits the authors, and sees the manuscripts through to publication. She or he selects the 12 to 15 abstracts from the *Archives Journals* that are reprinted each week in JAMA. The fellow has the opportunity to function as a senior editor, handling original contributions and other unsolicited manuscripts. That involves an initial screening, oversight of the peer-review and revision processes, manuscript editing, and work with staff on graphics, tables, and presentation. Numerous other opportunities are available and can be chosen according to individual interests. Some of the options available to the fellows include writing an essay to accompany the JAMA fine-art cover illustration; writing an article for the Medical News & Perspectives section; editing JAMA press releases; serving as peer reviewer for other JAMA editors; helping to select, review, and edit letters to the editor; and writing book reviews for publication in JAMA.

The Morris Fishbein Fellowship in Medical Editing is a 1-year training program offered by the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* to physicians interested in medical editing and publishing. The fellowship honors the late Morris Fishbein, who served at JAMA for 37 years, the last 25 (from September 1924 to December 1949) as editor-in-chief. Fishbein's interests in medical editing included a desire to teach others; in fact, in 1938 he published a book titled *Medical Editing: The Technic and the Art*. When he died, he left the journal an unrestricted legacy.

M Therese Southgate, while deputy editor at JAMA, recognized that most medical editors had little or no formal training for the job. She wanted to offer interested

The fellowship runs from July through June of each year. It is a full-time program that takes place at the JAMA editorial office in downtown Chicago. An MD or DO degree is a prerequisite for consideration. Currently, fellows are paid a stipend of \$44,000 for the year. Although the fellow works independently much of the time, her or his activities are overseen by a senior editor. For the last 12 years, Deputy Editor Richard M Glass has recruited, chosen, and supervised the fellow. In most years, there are about 20 applicants. Up to three of them are invited to come to Chicago to interview with JAMA Editor-in-Chief Catherine D DeAngelis, Glass, and other editorial staff. The choice of a fellow is based on a personal statement and writing sample and on appraisal of how well a candidate's experience and goals would fit with the training and experience offered in the fellowship.

Of the 23 people who have held the fellowship since its inception, more than half have spent some or all of their later careers in medical publishing or communications. One former fellow has been chief editor of two medical journals, another has been national coordinator for a project designed to teach physicians how to use the Internet for health care, and still another began working as a medical reporter for television immediately after his fellowship and has continued to be active in medical teaching on radio and via satellite broadcasting, on the Web, and at medical schools. Several have stayed on at JAMA. Deputy Editor Margaret A Winker and Senior Editors Stephen Lurie and Ronna Henry Siegel are former Fishbein fellows, as are several of the current contributing editors.

More than a quarter-century later, the Morris Fishbein Fellowship is alive and well. It continues to offer interested physicians a unique learning experience. Morris Fishbein, we suspect, would be happy to learn what has become of his legacy to JAMA.

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