

EDITOR'S NOTE

## Turning Submissions Into a Journal



Journals persist, flourish, or fail in response to the relevance of the content and the care that goes into developing it. *WEM* is a niche publication, almost certain to never reach the rarified air of the highest impact factors, but one that has flourished through the commitment of authors and those involved in the review process. The best reviews go beyond critical evaluation of manuscripts to actively challenge authors to develop their best work. Constructive comments are generously provided for almost all manuscripts, not just those destined for acceptance. Helping authors improve their scholarship is an investment in the community, even if an immediate product cannot be salvaged.

The threshold for acceptance of manuscripts is a moving target throughout the evolution of a journal. The earliest days and the lowest impact factors can be associated with having to accept almost all submissions. As the readership and submission rate grow, a greater degree of selectivity becomes possible. It is a welcome time for a journal when the pace of high-quality submissions is reliable enough that acceptance can be more discriminating. The usual implementation of increased selectivity is not a quota system; it does not make sense to arbitrarily set a rejection rate if all manuscripts are publishable. Instead, manuscripts that are less compelling scientifically or more tangential to the focus of the journal can be directed elsewhere. This is not to say that a focus should be maintained too rigorously: a journal can lose appeal if its content becomes too narrow. Welcoming high-quality manuscripts from the periphery of, or even from outside, the normal target range can bring in new perspectives and possibly introduce new readers to the journal. The key is having high-quality submissions from which to draw.

*WEM* has entered its 28th year of publication. It has grown from an upstart to a well-established journal.

In the final half of 2016, we processed 133 submissions. Of these, 22 were accepted, 45 were rejected, 32 ended the year being revised, 31 ended the year under review, and 3 were withdrawn. Revisions were requested in 98 cases, with 69 revisions being returned by the end of the year. Of the returned revisions, 43 (62%) were first revisions, 22 (32%) were second revisions, and 4 (6%) were third revisions. Overall, this constitutes a vigorous pattern of submissions, reviews, rereviews, and decisions.

All of this effort brings us to our product: a quarterly issue intended to engage and inform the readership. This issue includes the always-popular practice guidelines, in this case, the Wilderness Medical Society practice guidelines for prevention and management of avalanche and nonavalanche snow burial. We also have reports of original research on diarrhea in backpackers, on immunity markers in ultraendurance competitors, and on polymorphisms potentially associated with high-altitude pulmonary edema. Clinical case reports review injuries from snakes, caterpillars, and centipedes. Letters discuss inclined wind tunnel use to study human flight, explain how litter can adversely affect snakes, and debate acute mountain sickness. A book review considers *On Trails: An Exploration*, and a wilderness image provides a glimpse of vertical caving. We include in the issue acknowledgment of the 203 individuals who served as reviewers for *WEM* in 2016. I hope that their critical contributions are appreciated by all. Finally, in the online-only supplement, abstracts from the 6th Chronic Hypoxia Symposium held in La Paz, Bolivia, in October 2016 can be found.

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