

JOURNAL OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION (JPAE) ANNUAL REPORT

September 2022

Submitted by Trenton Honda and Libby Alesbury

NAME OF COUNCIL: JPAE Editorial Advisory Board

EDITOR IN CHIEF: Trenton Honda

BOARD MEMBERS: Trenton Honda, Alexandria Garino, Kristopher Maday, Anthony Miller, Elana Min, Daytheon Sturges, Brenda Quincy, Nick Hudak, Theresa Hegmann, and Elizabeth Alesbury (Managing Editor)

COUNCIL CHARGE: The JPAE Editorial Advisory Board is dedicated to publishing scholarly manuscripts germane to PA education and providing a forum for the sharing of ideas and innovations that will enhance the education of PA students.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The new Editor in Chief and JPAE Editorial Board have made significant progress over the past 9 months in terms of identifying and advancing the strategic priorities of the journal. This has included the following key deliverables: publishing three issues (March, June, and September), planning one additional issue (December), and representing the journal at key national conferences. This has also included identifying and defining strategic priorities for the journal and making operational changes to address them, including: 1) increasing accepted article quality, 2) boosting peer review quality, and 3) decreasing time from submission to publication, with the goal of attracting higher quality submissions and ultimately achieving an impact factor. Actions taken to advance these priorities include increasing the standard for journal submissions while continuing to support our readership in developing their research and scholarship skills, increasing guidance for authors and peer reviewers, and setting new standards for editor operations to decrease editorial review times. To continue to make progress toward these goals, as well as ensure the Journal is supporting PA faculty by promulgating time-sensitive research and information across the community, supporting authors in meeting the tenure and promotion expectations of their academic faculty roles, increasing the volume of high-quality material we publish, and decreasing the environmental impact of our operations, we will move the journal to an online-only publication beginning with the March 2023 issue. This will result in a substantially reduced time from submission to publication, with a goal of <6 months on average, compared to the past time frame, which averaged >1 year. In collaboration with PAEA, we have planned a messaging campaign to promote the benefits of this change to our readership and have planned operational changes in the editorial board and editor responsibilities to ensure that we are leveraging social media and electronic communications to highlight and disseminate our published research and scholarship in near real-time to enhance engagement with our readership, authors, and other external stakeholders.

KEY DELIVERABLES (YTD):

1. **New Editor in Chief:** Trenton Honda assumed the role of Editor in Chief (EIC) on January 1, 2022.
2. **JPAE Issues:** To date in 2022, two issues (March & June) of JPAE have been published, with the September and December issues both planned for on-time publication before the end of the calendar year. To date, the two published issues include a total of 7 Research articles, 10 Special articles, 10 Abstracts and Brief Reports, 8 Feature articles, 2 Letters to the Editor, and 1 Editorial. For the upcoming September and December issues, we plan to publish a total of 14 Research articles, 9 Special articles, 8 Brief Reports, 8 Feature articles, and 2 Editorials.
3. **Research/Publishing Sessions at Annual Conferences:** In an ongoing effort to promote increased scholarly research in the PA education community, the EIC of JPAE partnered with the EIC of JAAPA to hold a peer review development and mentoring session at the 2022 AAPA Conference. This session was geared toward cultivating interest and developing the necessary skills in those interested in becoming peer reviewers for JAAPA and JPAE. A similar session has been proposed and accepted for the PAEA 2022 Education Forum and will be staffed by JAAPA and JPAE Assistant Editors and Editorial Board members.
4. **Change in Abstract and Brief Report Feature Editors:** In recognition of the uniquely important work conducted by our ABR Feature Editors, which has included processing approximately 28% of all JPAE submissions YTD in 2022 and working with the EIC to raise the quality and expectations of our citable content, the EIC, in consultation with the CEO of PAEA, elevated these positions to Assistant Editors of JPAE with *ex officio* board member status. Additionally, one ABR Feature Editor resigned in 2022 due to a conflict of interest with her new place of employment and was replaced in August 2022 with Theresa Hegmann.

STRATEGIC JOURNAL PRIORITIES (YTD)

Major identified opportunities for advancing JPAE have been identified by the EIC and the editorial board. These include: 1) securing an impact factor, 2) increasing article quality, 3) boosting peer review quality, and 4) decreasing time from submission to publication. The following actions have been taken to address each of these challenges:

- a. **Impact Factor:** In 2017, Wolters Kluwer deemed JPAE a strong candidate and applied for an impact factor, a measure of the frequency with which the average article in a journal has been cited during a particular year. A high impact factor lends prestige and credibility to an academic journal. The process for awarding an impact factor was altered in 2019, which has resulted in major delays in processing the applications for impact factors. JPAE continues to await a decision. To improve our chances of being awarded an impact factor, we have increased article selectivity and publication standards to increase the citations per article, cultivated authors from across the interprofessional and international spheres to increase the breadth of readership and scholarly submissions to the journal, and improved author and peer review guidance (see below for further details).
- b. **Selectivity:** Working with the ABR editors, the EIC has set new standards for publication to ensure that articles published in our “citable” content areas are of a high enough caliber as to likely be cited by other work across the medical and health education community. (Table 1). Importantly, while we have become more selective, we are still much more accessible than our peer and aspirational-peer

medical education publications. We believe that this will positively impact our ability to be awarded an Impact Factor, as well as increase the stature of the journal in the biomedical education sphere.

Table 1. JPAE acceptance rate over time as compared to peer medical education publications

Journal	2021	2022 (YTD)
JPAE	68%	35%
JAAPA (IF: 1.35)	26%*	pending
Academic Medicine (IF: 6.89)	15%	pending
Medical Teacher (IF: 4.27)	14%	pending

* Acceptance rate for research articles only; Reed, H., Dehn, R. W., & Bushardt, R. L. (2022). Reasons for unsuccessful research submissions to JAAPA. *JAAPA*, 35(5), 54-56.

- c. **Increased Standards of Publication:** The EIC and ABR editors have included an “editor’s review” section in correspondence with authors regarding manuscripts for which we have methodological or validity concerns that are not addressed by peer reviewers. In this way, all articles are held to the same high standard of scientific reliability and validity. The EIC and ABR feature editors have also set a standard of supportive, actionable, and detailed feedback standards for rejected articles to support newer researchers as they develop their scholarship skills. This involves providing detailed feedback to authors of rejected articles on how their papers could be improved such that they would be potentially eligible for future publication in JPAE. This has also included meeting with several authors of previously accepted articles to ensure that these high standards are met prior to moving the accepted articles to publication. As such, the new standards are being reflected in real-time within the JPAE quarterly issues, despite a backlog of previously accepted material awaiting publication.
- d. **Cultivate Interprofessional and International Authorship:** The EIC has worked with ABR and other feature editors to increase the outreach to interprofessional and international authors to invite submissions and make them aware of JPAE. We believe this will result in an increase in citations of our articles from outside of the U.S. PA education realm and will improve our likelihood of achieving an impact factor.
- e. **Increased Guidance for Authors:** The EIC noted that the Special Article type was receiving numerous submissions of narrative reviews that did not meet general scientific standards for rigor of review articles. The EIC and editorial board convened a subcommittee to develop and publish [specific guidance](#) on the expectations around publishable review articles, which is now posted online in the Instructions for Authors section.
- f. **Increase Standards of Peer Review:** The EIC and ABR editors have developed a new peer review rubric to better guide peer reviewers on the expectations of their reviews for our citable content ([Research Articles/Abstracts and Brief Reports](#))
- g. **Reducing Time from Submission to Publication:** The time from submission to publication for JPAE relative to peer and aspirational-peer journals is detailed in Table 2. Across all article types, 2022 has seen a reduction in the time to reviewer invitation of 50 days (a 77% reduction), a reduction in the time to first decision of 59 days (a 66% reduction), and an overall reduction in time to acceptance of 98 days (a 50% reduction). These metrics likely underestimate the true changes in editorial turnaround times due to the impacts of articles backlogged in 2021 being moved through the editorial process in January of 2022. For example, when removing this month, the average submission to reviewer invitation time for our Research and Special Articles is 1.4 days. While this reduction in

time from submission to acceptance will have a positive impact on time to publication, the increasingly large number of submissions over the past several years has outpaced our page counts, resulting in a backlog of accepted articles awaiting publication in an issue. This backlog results in >9 months between acceptance and publication, on average.

Table 2. Editorial Turnaround Times

Editorial Window	JPAE 2021	JPAE 2022	Academic Medicine	Medical Teacher	BMC Med Ed
Submission to Editor Assignment	3	2	*	*	*
Submission to Reviewer Invitation	65	15	*	*	*
Submission to First Decision	89	30	*	21	*
Submission to Post-Review Decision/Acceptance	196	98	90	88	77

*not published

STRATEGIC JOURNAL PRIORITIES: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

During the current year we have made great progress in addressing the major journal challenges identified by the EIC and Editorial Board. However, additional significant opportunities to advance the journal remain. These include:

- 1) Helping support promotion and tenure among our readership and submitting authors by decreasing time to publication, increasing the average citations among accepted articles, and achieving an impact factor.
- 2) Incentivizing high quality submissions from researchers by streamlining the submission and publication process.
- 3) Efficiently promulgating information that impacts our readership by publishing time-sensitive research and innovations in near real-time.
- 4) Increasing the volume of high-quality research that we publish every year to match the increased volume of submissions and decrease the backlog of articles awaiting publication.
- 5) Decreasing the environmental impact of the journal in terms of paper, plastic, and carbon footprint
- 6) Increasing the scope of impact from our published research by leveraging social media and multimedia dissemination methods.

To further our progress toward our current goals and to make progress toward these additional opportunities, we will move the journal to an online-only format as of the March 2023 issue, with a goal of publishing all articles online (ahead of print) within <60 days after acceptance which will be possible due to the increased pages allowed by being online-only. We will launch a messaging campaign beginning October 2022 to explain and highlight the benefits of this transition to our readership. We believe that these changes will advance the strategic priorities of JPAE and position us to emerge as a leader in health and medical education scholarship.