

EDITORIAL**STUDENT JOURNALS IN TODAY'S WORLD:
DEFINING A NICHE**

Some speakers like to use graphical terms such as "booming" or "exploding", to impress upon the audience that a particular field of medicine is progressing rapidly. Properly trained to avoid unsubstantiated claims, they will invariably toss in some astronomical number-the publications this field has produced in recent years-compare to another, number number of published works during a similar time frame only a decade or so ago, and hopefully mesmerize a room full of astonished people.

I urge you to try this at home. Log on to PubMed (1); then, with a few simple clicks, you will see that the field of angiogenesis has generated close to 9000 papers in the past four years, more than 8 times as many as a similar period between 1988 and 1992; you will also see how the field of apoptosis has indeed "exploded", publishing 58 times more papers as it did a decade ago; even my favorite family of cell-surface receptors, the integrins, are yielding their secrets, in published form, three times as fast-which translates into more choices for the Journal Club. Despite the excitement of being part of a vibrantly expanding scientific community, keeping up-to-date with scientific discoveries never seemed more intimidating. There is simply too much going on out there to read everything; a reader must be selective.

At first glance, this may seem to question the value of student-run journals such as the MJM. Completely reliant on student volunteers, these establishments are frequently understaffed, occasionally under funded, and are subjected to a yearly flux of its members (and consequently the continuous loss of hard-won experience). There would seem to be absolutely no reason for anyone to choose a student-run journal over Nature, or any one of its more than a dozen derivatives. Is there something that makes the MJM special?

The answer is a definitive and reassuring "yes". Being an "International Forum for the Advancement of Medical Science by Students", MJM looks at the medical world from the students' perspective-and this is our unique niche. MJM's focus on the student is reflected not only in the composition of our internal and external editorial staff, but also in the makeup of our contributing authors as well as our readership. In our Letters and Commentaries sections our readers discuss issues pertaining to students; clinical and/or

basic science concepts are reviewed by students; student research is presented in MJM's Original Articles and Case Reports sections; even our Book Reviews, written by students, feature titles that may be particularly relevant and interesting to this group.

Furthermore, it has been our policy to extend MJM's vision to "help young, unknown scientists" (2) as they prepare and submit manuscripts, often for the first time. We are also upgrading MJM's peer-review system, by establishing an internet-based eMJM Forum, which will facilitate the participation of external student editors. I would like to encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities offered by MJM, and in turn help MJM serve as "an important forum for those who will be the leaders in the medical sciences" (2) in the near future.

REFERENCES

1. Pubmed Medline. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/> 2002
2. Starich GH, Zenan JS. Journal review of the MJM by the Journal of the American Medical Association. JAMA 1997; 278: 1461-1462.

Alexander Zhai is the sixth Editor-in-Chief of the MJM. He has obtained a B.Sc. in Biochemistry at McGill university, and is currently in his fifth year in the M.D./Ph.D. Program. His current research is conducted in McGill Cancer Centre, and involves the interaction of cell surface glycoproteins. His research is funded by the CIHR studentship.