

A Look Back at *JNMT* Editors

Since its debut issue in 1973, 7 editors have guided the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology* as it has grown to be the leading publication on the technology of nuclear medicine. At the same time, the field itself has undergone tremendous changes, especially in the last 2 decades. This month, we look back at earlier editors of the journal and talk with those under whose direction *JNMT* has added features and expanded its focus to reflect these changes.

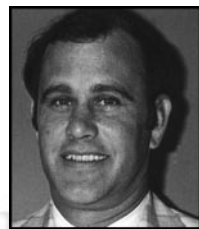
The first issue of *JNMT* appeared in March 1973 under the editorship of Glenn Isserstedt at the University of Iowa. An administrative assistant and coordinator of education for the radiology department at University Hospital, he was active in local and national nuclear medicine affairs and served as chair of the SNMTS Continuing Education and Publication Committee.

From the beginning, *JNMT* distinguished itself from many of its contemporary "tech" journals that focused on workplace issues. The journal was founded because the growing numbers of nuclear medicine technologists recognized a need to share and discuss the basic science and techniques associated with their daily activities. As a result, high-quality, peer-reviewed scientific content was included from the beginning.

Submissions from the nuclear medicine community in the United States and beyond were bolstered by the designation of an annual prize for the outstanding scientific article published in *JNMT*. The first prize was awarded to Ficken et al. from the University of Oklahoma Health Services Center (Oklahoma City) for "Radionuclide

Contamination of Fission Generator Eluate" (*J Nucl Med Technol.* 1973,1:11-13). The professional level that the journal maintained from the start led to its inclusion in the Chemical Abstracts Service database in 1974, a distinction given at that time to few technologist-produced and -oriented publications.

In September of 1974, Isserstedt became president-elect of SNMTS and was succeeded as editor of *JNMT* by David Wells, a member of the journal's



David Wells
1974-1977

editorial board and supervisory technologist and instructor at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City. Wells had served as program director for a popular workshop at the annual SNM meeting on "How to Write a Technical Paper" and was the author of numerous scientific articles.

Patricia Weigand, who had served as a consulting editor to *JNMT* for more than 2 years, became editor at the end of Wells's term in 1978. An accomplished author from the Veterans Administration Hospital (Philadelphia, PA), she had won the award for outstanding paper in the journal in both 1975 and 1976 with articles on radioimmunoassay technique. Under her direction, the editorial content of the journal was upgraded and the range of topics expanded. At a time when nuclear medicine itself was in search of new directions, *JNMT* stayed remarkably on course, covering those issues that were of interest to technologists and keeping up with new research and promising innovations.

In 1983, Paul Christian, technical di-



Paul Christian
1983-1988

rector of nuclear medicine at the University of Utah Medical Center became editor of the journal. With a strong background in nuclear medicine and physics, he also brought a proven track record in publications to the assignment. "It was important to me to identify the needs of our audience," he said. "We undertook a readership survey and made subsequent changes to the journal to enhance those sections that readers responded were the most valuable." The survey and other feedback indicated the pressing need for more and better continuing education (CE) opportunities for nuclear medicine technologists.

"One of my goals was to elevate the quality of the scientific articles in the journal and also to increase the number of pages," said Christian. "The inclusion of CE articles that were rich in content and germane to the needs of our readership fulfilled both of these goals." The first CE articles in *JNMT* were published under his editorship, as well as the first review articles.

Reflecting back on his 2 terms at the head of the journal, Christian noted that his biggest challenge was the perennial problem for editors: soliciting good articles for publication. "But any difficulties along the way were more than made up for by a feeling of contributing a valuable service to all of nuclear medicine and at the same time meeting and working with so many people from a wide variety of institutions and backgrounds," he said. "We clearly had a reservoir of vast experience to draw on in our SNMTS membership and beyond. I think that the CE articles and review articles made a big difference in improving the usefulness of the journal for technologists."

Sue Weiss, a past SNMTS presi-



Sue Weiss
1989–1994

dent and recipient of the outstanding *JNMT* paper award in 1974, became editor in 1989. Under her direction, the journal cover was redesigned and short “artifact” articles were introduced.

“We introduced regular editorials from both associate and consulting editors to discuss many of the issues that were crucial to practicing nuclear medicine technologists and to those considering entering the field,” Weiss said. Under her direction, *JNMT* achieved the distinction of being included in the *Index Medicus*. The timing proved fortuitous, as it was during this period that the entire medical world ventured online. Awareness of *JNMT* rose, both within nuclear medicine and in other specialties.

Weiss published the first CE series on PET for technologists—at a time when many imaging specialists were still denying that the modality would ever achieve widespread clinical use. “Getting quality CE articles was not always easy,” she said. “But these were important and served a very real need.” She looked back on her 2 terms as editor positively: “Personally, I learned so much, it has helped me in everything I have done since!”

Sue Gilbert became the journal’s sixth editor in 1995. A nuclear medicine supervisor at the VA Hospital in Portland, OR, she had also served on the *JNMT* editorial board. Under her direction, editorial production of the journal was computerized and, for the first time, some (but not all) articles were sub-



Sue Gilbert
1995–2000

mitted, edited, and sent to the press electronically. Also in 1995, the journal’s audience expanded when it was included in the listings for the *Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature*.



Beth Harkness
2001–present

Before Beth Harkness became editor in 2001, the central editorial office for the journal changed with each new editor. Under her direction, the *JNMT* office was moved to SNM headquarters in Reston, VA, a change that provides a new level of support staff continuity. The entire manuscript submission and peer-review process moved online during her editorship, a process that Harkness noted was difficult at times but ultimately rewarding for both authors and reviewers.

In only 3 years, the content of *JNMT* has changed under Harkness to reflect the rapid pace of technological development in nuclear medicine. “The increased role of PET in nuclear medicine has created a great need for articles about basic science and technique related to this technology,” Harkness said. “We’ve tried to provide both technologists and physicians with articles that help them understand the technical aspects of PET. The CE papers of authors such as Turkington, Fahey, Nabi, and Hamblen have been very important because they presented information about PET that the nuclear community really needed.”

She also noted the satisfaction that comes to an editor who shepherds a new author through the peer-review process for the first time. “I hope that the experience of publishing that first article will encourage these new authors to write more articles in the future,” she said. “To me it’s really

rewarding to see new people making that first effort to publish a scientific paper.”

Harkness hopes to regularly include new ideas in the pages of *JNMT*. “I like to see papers that challenge the way we think about some aspect of nuclear medicine,” she said. “One example is Jennifer Prekeges recent article on radiation hormesis (*J Nucl Med Tech*. 2003,31:11–17).” She wanted people to think seriously about this idea, and I think that was effective.”

JNMT editors interviewed for this story agreed that the biggest challenge for *JNMT* today is keeping up with the speed and variety of change in nuclear medicine. Christian noted, “With the rapid evolution toward image fusion, the widespread use of clinical PET, and the likelihood that PET/CT will become the standard of care in oncology, *JNMT* has more ground to cover at a faster pace than ever before.” At the same time, most technologists are finding their working days increasingly filled with patient loads, constant training, and record-keeping demands that seem to change and grow exponentially. “One challenge for *JNMT* in this environment is getting enough articles,” said Weiss.

One of the responses to these challenges has been a rethinking of the journal’s purpose and target audience. “*JNMT* has long been thought of as ‘the journal for technologists,’ but I think it can and should have a broader role,” said Harkness. “We are trying to position it instead as the journal for *technical* information about *all* of nuclear medicine. Articles about the best techniques, alternative approaches, and other innovations is important to everyone who works in this field. We’re making some progress in broadening our approach, but we have a long way to go.”