

Shaping the future of physiology

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The Physiological Society has a proud history at the forefront of the life sciences. For over 140 years, Society members have been advancing our understanding of the mechanisms of life. And just as past discoveries have increased our knowledge of how living organisms function, it is the future of physiology that will continue shaping our understanding of life. But with no deadline for when the future begins, The Society recognises that supporting physiologists at the beginning of their careers is key to increasing the impact of the discipline – to making physiology flourish.

Over the years, Society support for newer generations of physiologists has taken several forms. Perhaps the most visible of these efforts has been the Future Physiology conferences and the Young Physiologists' Symposia. There have also been many training workshops, and Society travel grants have seen physiologists of all career stages attend scientific conferences. As the flagship society journal, *The Journal of Physiology* also leverages its unique position in support of early career researchers. For example, the Journal Club article format provides an exclusive venue for trainee scientists – PhD students and postdoctoral researchers – to publish review articles. *The Journal* also highlights excellence in the published work of early career authors with the annual Early Investigator Prizes. Such initiatives that encourage submissions from early career researchers or provide recognition of the work of early career authors are now common in several journals. But whilst most junior investigators have some experience in writing articles, and everyone, of course, is grateful for recognition, there are many in academia who are unfamiliar with what it takes for a written manuscript to become a published piece of work.

To help bridge this gap in experience, *The Journal of Physiology* made a commitment to engage physiologists at the early stages of their careers in the editorial process. Since 2018, *The Journal's* Editorial Board Fellowship has offered early-career researchers a 2-year opportunity to serve on the editorial board. Those joining *The Journal of Physiology* Editorial Fellowship scheme this year include:

- Andrew Holmes, University of Birmingham
- Chris McGlory, Queen's University
- Jian Shi, University of Leeds
- Kyle McCommis, St Louis University School of Medicine
- Lykke Sylow, University of Copenhagen
- Maria Chondronikola, University of California, Davis
- Michael Okun, University of Leicester
- Tommas Ellender, University of Oxford

We, the authors of this editorial, have just graduated from the inaugural 2018 Editorial Board Fellowship class. As our time as fellows comes to an end, we congratulate this year's successful candidates on their appointments. It is encouraging that others are following in the journey we embarked upon not so long ago, and we hope that they too will find the Editorial Board Fellowship an exceptionally rewarding opportunity. Throughout our time as fellows, we have been given a behind-the-scenes look at how a society journal operates, and we have gained first-hand experience of editorial decision-making. We have expanded our professional networks with fellow editorial

board members from around the world and from all subdisciplines of physiology. Under the mentorship of the senior editorial team, we have learned how to critically assess research papers, how to interpret even the most cryptic of reviewers' reports, and become intimately familiar with the peer review process. We have all been impressed by the mechanisms that ensure a rigorous but fair evaluation, and we have been delighted to witness many manuscripts improved because of them. Collectively, we have guided over 100 manuscripts through the editorial process. We have seen how referees constructively critique the work of their peers for the benefit of the wider scientific community. Conversely, we have also seen the myriad ways in which scientists respond to perceived shortcomings in their work. We have seen successful rebuttals and we have seen those that have failed to convince. We have learned how to interpret these reviews and rebuttals to inform decisions on the suitability of manuscripts for publication and how to combine these into cohesive decision letters that guide authors' next steps. We have done all of this even when the subject matter has placed us outside our own comfort zone. There is no doubt that this editorial experience will improve our own ability to navigate peer review and so accelerate our future publication efforts.

And now, as our own fellowships end, we are excited that this opportunity will continue to benefit the careers of junior physiologists. But we have not yet interpreted our last reviewers' reports. We have been afforded the opportunity to continue serving as Reviewing Editors, and so our journey at *The Journal* goes on. As we transition into these new roles, we are thankful for having been able to engage with the publishing process at *The Journal of Physiology*. In having done so, we share in the experience of having shaped the scientific record, despite the diversity of physiology that we represent. We hope that other researchers will continue to follow us on this journey and that the Editorial Board Fellowship will provide junior researchers with their first editorial experience for years to come. But we realise that joining an editorial board might seem like just another commitment to accommodate in an already busy schedule. And we know that some of you early career researchers are questioning whether it is worth investing your time in work that does not directly result in research publication. The answer is yes! So please seek an editorial role of your own and help shape the future of physiology.

Author contributions

All authors have read and approved the final version of this manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved. All persons designated as authors qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify for authorship are listed.

Funding

CW is supported by Wellcome Trust (204682/Z/16/Z; 202924/Z/16/Z) and the British Heart Foundation (PG/16/54/32230; PG16/82/32439; PG/20/9/34859). MGG is supported by NIH (1R01AT009365).

Accepted manuscript of the following research output: Ferdek, P., Gareau, M. G., Gonzalez, J., & Wilson, C. (2020). Shaping the future of physiology. *The Journal of Physiology*, 598(13), 2511-2512. <https://doi.org/10.1113/JP280152>