Guest Editorial: Reflections of a Chairman

In December 1988, Dr. Charles Spratt retired as chairman of the journal committee. Few people probably know, as we do, how much of the creation of Quality Assurance and Utilization Review and its continued growth are a credit to Dr. Spratt. We invited him to write the editorial which follows. Charlie's insight, good humor, commitment, and hard work have been gifts to us all. With a full measure of gratitude, we wish him and his wife full measures of good health and rewarding years ahead.

Webster defines “odyssey” as “an extended adventurous wandering,” and in retrospect that is exactly how I would describe the progress of our journal, since Vol. 1, No. 1 was published in February 1986, 3 years ago. When appointed in 1985 to chair the Journal Committee, I approached the task with great trepidation, and decided that in order to assure that my future would be reasonably safe, I would orchestrate the selection of the best possible editor with the assistance of the Editorial board, and the selection of a prominent medical publisher with the help of the Advisory board. These two boards constituted the Journal Committee. With these two tasks completed, the next step was to obtain “seed money” for start-up expenses until the publisher’s editorial allowance would begin to come in. The Board of Governors of ACURP conveniently increased the dues to cover subscriptions, and solicited the chapters for financial donations. For both of these actions we are extremely grateful, as they facilitated our progress toward what turned out to be the most difficult step in the entire journey-obtaining editorial copy.

At first we approached all seminar speakers either before or after the seminars, asking that they translate their thoughts from lecture to manuscript format. We even sent them transcriptions of their taped remarks to facilitate the process. There was some response, but not adequate for the efforts involved. The journal editor and I wrote literally hundreds of letters to quality assurance and utilization review (Q.A. & U.R.) personnel, gleaned from lists of speakers and authors from many sources. Here the response was a little better.

This copy search was the most frustrating part of the entire enterprise. I could never understand why, in an organization of 1200 experts in the field of Q.A. & U.R., there was such a lack of interest in getting thoughts and ideas published for exchange with fellow experts. Your expertise could help to lay the ground rules for the future of your chosen field, but will do no good if locked up within yourselves. However, after 3 years, while we are not oversupplied with manuscripts, we do not have to sit and worry whether or not we will reach the next issue deadline which is 3 months before each publication date. This is progress.

To bring you up to date, after 3 years we have a journal with a fine editor who believes that the journal should not be a pamphlet or collection of reprints, but rather a professionally executed, juried journal of which we can all be proud. We have excellent Editorial and Advisory Boards whose members have contributed unselfishly to further our success. We have a prominent medical publisher who has been very cooperative in meeting our production needs. We have an editorial assistant without whose organization skills the office could not function, and we receive solicitous support from the ACURP staff in Florida.

This editorial has also been an “extended adventurous wandering” or personal odyssey of 3 years of touch and go. As I leave the post of Chairman I will take the prerogative to urge all readers of the journal to consider these requests:

- Support and assist your editor
- Spread the readership of the journal throughout your areas of endeavor
- Don’t hide your talents under a bushel basket; spread your experience by writing or obtaining articles from your colleagues
- Help to start a Letters to the Editor department as a regular feature akin to the Case Study, Legal Issues, and Literature Review. Share your thoughts and ideas to help establish dialogue with your associates

This journal is on its way! I feel that we will be literarily and fiscally solvent by the end of 1989. Play an active part in this success and enjoy the feeling of personal satisfaction that I have enjoyed during these past 3 years.

Charles E. Spratt, M.D.
Chairman, Journal Committee