

FROM THE EDITOR

As we begin our third year of publication, we must express our sincere thanks for the efforts of many health care professionals. The editorial board, in particular, has been extremely supportive and an important part of the success of the journal. Their thoughtful, critical evaluations in the peer review process have helped to produce useful and well-written manuscripts. Our guest editors and authors have spent a great deal of time and energy recruiting, writing, reviewing, and re-writing manuscripts. What a great group of professionals!

This issue is entitled "Pain and Disability: The Multi-Million Dollar Problem." While the publisher may think this title is a bit long, it certainly is a big issue which probably raises more questions than answers. Though oriented slightly different from our other issues, we believe it addresses problems most of us face in our practice of physical medicine and rehabilitation.

To begin with, Norman Harden brings us up-to-date on the neurophysiology of pain. He has a knack for making a very difficult subject very clear. The illustrations are outstanding. Next, Steve Brena describes his systematic approach to assessment of disability. This editor, in an editorial comment, expands a bit on one of her favorite topics. Raymond Tait has comprehensively discussed the psychological assessment of disability. Both pieces are excellent reviews based on their many years of experience with chronic pain patients. Jeff Kreider expresses his opinion on the state of chronic pain programs in his commentary, "Redefining Chronic Pain Programs." He has had 24 years of experience as a consultant in this area.

Since this area is very controversial, we have included some rebuttal comments by a physiatrist, Mike Decker, who has 15 years of experience running a successful inpatient chronic pain unit. This makes for a very interesting point-counterpoint discussion. Most of us know that case management is the latest "buzz word." Again, Kreider relates his own experience, as he has seen case management develop from an idea into a reality. He shares his description of an efficient case manager.

Should there be an impairment listing for pain? Sergio Delgado, president of the American Academy of Disability Evaluating Physicians, answers "yes!" Harold Merskey, world renowned psychiatrist in chronic pain, says "no!" Perhaps after reading these companion articles, you will be prepared to make a more informed decision.

Steve Long gives strong support to the concept of treating chronic pain patients in an organized, multidisciplinary program. Finally, Mary Wells describes the importance of early intervention into chronic pain as she describes her EMPOWER program within the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at MCV.

These manuscripts were conceptualized with the purpose of generating thought and discussion in the area of chronic pain and disability. There may be significant disagreement with the concepts presented here. Please send us your "Letter to the Editor" regarding this issue. We want to hear your comments.

Karen S. Rucker, MD, Editor