

EDITORIAL

A MISSION STATEMENT

I recently received a letter from a reader who requested that it not be published. Consequently, I will respect that person's anonymity and just refer to an issue raised because I believe it is important. The author commented on increasing criticism of the *Journal of Behavioral Optometry (JBO)* in a particular community. Further, the author stated that quoting of articles published in *JBO* gets....“derisions of laughter from some academic circles here....” This person called for a more rigorous review process so that articles can be used in defense of behavioral optometry.

This letter made me aware of something I've discussed with other editors and members of peer review panels, yet is often not clearly stated: that each publication has its own mission. The mission determines the review process and consequent characteristics of articles that it publishes. Further, it should alert and orient readers to the type of articles that will appear. Consequently, I reviewed three recent issues of several optometric journals and another one related to health care. In none of them, and I would add *JBO* to the list, was there a firm statement of the journal's purpose.

The closest to a mission statement I could find in the back issues of these journals were in their instructions for the submission of manuscripts, i.e., guidelines to authors or instructions to authors. My opinion is that these are not specific enough and that they do not appear often enough: *JBO* prints such a piece only in the first issue of each year.

My experience has taught me that it is difficult for a professional journal to be all things to all people. If we use the analogy of “townies” (clinicians) and

“gownies” (the academically based), publications whose primary target is the one of these groups are usually of lesser interest to the other. Some publications emphasize reporting of research results, while others emphasize the provision of clinically relevant information. Put another way, some primarily inform while others primarily educate. Nevertheless I could not find an optometric journal that deals exclusively with one or the other of my proposed dichotomy. There is not a mutual exclusivity, but rather a matter of degree. Thus, articles are published according criteria that reflect the purpose of the sponsoring organization, the needs of its Clinical Associates, and the journal's editorial culture and ethos.

I have drafted the following mission statement for *JBO*:

This peer reviewed journal is devoted to the publication of articles of interest to the membership of its sponsoring organization, the Optometric Extension Program Foundation, Inc. (OEP). It encourages authors to submit manuscripts that are based in the clinically relevant behavioral, functional and developmental aspects of the visual system. The category of articles that are considered follows in random order:

1. clinical case reports
2. preliminary and completed clinically relevant research reports
3. speculative reports of new and adapted clinical diagnostic and therapeutic measures
4. literature reviews
5. guest editorials
6. essays
7. viewpoint articles

I invite input from *JBO*'s readership regarding the above proposed mission

statement. Please send your comments to idrگا@aol.com. These will be incorporated into a revised statement before I forward it to OEP's Board of Directors for its consideration.

There was an exchange of e-mails between the anonymous letter writer and me. In these communications I thanked the person for raising an important issue, and I now offer public thanks. It is essential that the editorial and peer review boards of *JBO* are attuned to the needs of our readership.

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