

A Bold Vision for JAT: All in for the Top 10

Jay Hertel, PhD, ATC, FNATA

It is with humility and excitement that I begin my role as Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Athletic Training (JAT)*. As I take the editorial baton from my predecessor, Dr Craig Denegar, *JAT* is in a good place. Dr Denegar's leadership over the past 6 years, and that of the editors-in-chief before him, has built a strong and respected peer-reviewed journal. I have had the good fortune of working closely with the 3 most recent editors-in-chief of *JAT* over the course of my career. Dr Dave Perrin (Editor-in-Chief from 1996 to 2004) was my master's thesis adviser, Dr Chris Ingersoll (Editor-in-Chief from 2004 to 2012) and I worked together at the University of Virginia for 6 years, and Dr Denegar was my PhD adviser and later faculty colleague at Penn State University for another 5 years; we even shared an office for a few years. Although none of us had any idea that the role of *JAT* Editor-in-Chief was in my future while we were working together, these mentors taught me many lessons that have prepared me for my new role. I am sure I will have many moments in the coming years where I will ask myself, "What would Craig/Chris/Dave do in this situation?"

What does it mean to be a professional association's flagship journal in 2018? The *JAT* serves many roles, including (1) advancing the scientific understanding and clinical practice of athletic training and sports medicine, (2) providing the evidence to aid clinicians in performing evidence-based practice, (3) exposing sports medicine clinicians and scholars, regardless of professional discipline or country of practice, to the athletic training profession, and (4) cultivating young scholars as they seek to publish their work. The *JAT* both serves the athletic training profession and promotes it. As a diamond open-access journal that provides all of our online content to all readers at no cost and with no submission or publication fees for authors, *JAT* functions as a beacon promoting athletic training to the worldwide sports medicine community.

My aim is for *JAT* to affect athletic trainers' (ATs') clinical practice on a daily basis. The *JAT* is no longer a printed journal that ATs receive quarterly in their mailbox; instead, it has now evolved into an online resource available to readers worldwide, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It cannot be viewed as a passive resource that waits for readers to find it. Initiatives must be championed that place new content directly into readers' online feeds. To make *JAT* the best online journal it can be, we must emphasize means of information delivery that move beyond the printed page.

Additionally, I aim to increase *JAT*'s ranking among its peer journals. The most common ranking of a journal's quality is its impact factor, a metric based on how often a journal's articles are cited in newly published articles. The *JAT* impact factor currently ranks at a respectable 75th

percentile of all sports science journals. (The 2017 impact factor was 2.319, ranking 30th of 81 journals in the Sports Sciences category, as obtained from *InCites Journal Citation Reports* on July 2, 2018.) My 5-year goal is to raise *JAT*'s impact factor to be among the top 10 of journals in the Sports Sciences category.

In an effort to achieve the goals outlined in the previous 2 paragraphs, I offer an initiative entitled "All in for the Top 10," consisting of coordinated efforts to improve the quality indicators of *JAT* while simultaneously better serving and expanding *JAT*'s readership.

1. Eliminate the Backlog. In the past few years, *JAT*'s most glaring weakness has been its production backlog, requiring authors to wait excessive lengths of time between manuscript acceptance and publication. Per Dr Denegar's request, the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) Board of Directors recently made substantial investments to increase the speed of postacceptance manuscript editing and production. By the end of 2018, our goal is to have typeset preprints of newly accepted manuscripts fully available on the *JAT* Web site and indexed on PubMed within 35 days of acceptance.

2. Encourage ATs to Submit Their Best Research to JAT. We will appeal directly to leading athletic training scholars to submit their best and most important research to *JAT* to maximize communication of these results directly to ATs and other sports medicine professionals in the NATA's flagship journal and simultaneously raise the status of *JAT* in the impact factor rankings.

3. Be More Selective in Accepting Manuscripts. The rigor of *JAT*'s peer-review and decision process must increase. We will accept articles that the editors and peer reviewers rate as being in the top 20% of all articles in the specific topic area, with a preference for studies that employ robust research designs and focus on patient-oriented clinical and translational research.

4. Curate a Series of Current Concepts Articles. In 2019, we will begin to offer narrative literature review articles that summarize the state of the science and provide clinical practice recommendations for common conditions and appropriate interventions in athletic training practice.

5. Increase the Number of Thematic Issues. We will cultivate special issues that focus on important clinical topics and professional concerns and provide a contemporary compendium of the state of the science and clinical practice in these areas. We are currently developing thematic issues on public health in athletic training, lateral ankle sprains and instability, and youth sport specialization. If you have an idea for a thematic issue, please contact the NATA Journals Office at jat@health.slu.edu.

6. Print Thought-Provoking Editorials. Each issue will contain an opening editorial, linked to a traditional article

in the same issue, to stimulate discussion among the journal's readership on key, and sometimes controversial, subjects in clinical practice and the professional evolution of athletic training.

7. Establish a Prominent Social-Media Presence. In an effort to publicize *JAT* content, drive more readers to articles on the *JAT* Web site, and increase the interaction between readers and authors, we are making substantial efforts to increase the number of *JAT* followers on Twitter (@JAT_NATA) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/JATNATA) and the number of subscribers to monthly table-of-contents notifications. Dr Christopher Kuenze, from Michigan State University, has agreed to be *JAT*'s first Associate Editor for Digital Media, and he is already leading several exciting social-media initiatives. The best way to learn about these initiatives is to follow *JAT* on Twitter or Facebook.

8. Develop More Digital Content, Including Podcasts, Infographics, and Visual Abstracts. The *JAT* will provide additional ways to digitally consume information that is published in its articles, among them a podcast series that features author interviews, infographics, and visual abstracts that summarize the findings of published articles. The aim of these initiatives is to provide different means of supplying new information to readers, drive more readers to access *JAT* articles, and promote the athletic training profession. Look for these initiatives in the coming months.

9. Encourage the Submission of Supplemental Materials. Authors will be encouraged to submit supplemental materials with their manuscripts, including

(but not limited to) data files, data-processing and statistical-analysis codes, and video files of the clinical interventions and measurement techniques used in their studies.

10. Embrace "Altmetrics." We will track and aim to improve alternative measures of *JAT*'s impact and reach, such as the number of HTML views and full-text downloads of articles, as well as the quantity of impressions for individual articles on social media.

I recognize this is a bold vision for *JAT*, but it is necessary to make *JAT* the best journal it can be. Of course, the journals ranked higher than *JAT* will also continue to enhance their publications, so we will need to be vigilant, proactive, and deliberate as we work to achieve these goals. Also, we must never lose sight that the quality of the science must come first in our efforts to improve *JAT*'s stature and reputation.

In closing, *JAT*'s future will not hinge solely on my contributions as Editor-in-Chief. Improving *JAT*'s impact factor and reach will take the efforts of a community that includes our associate editors; editorial board and peer reviewers; our authors; our readers; and the editorial staff in the NATA Journals and Allen Press offices. If you are an author interested in submitting work to *JAT*, please see our Authors' Guide (http://natajournals.org/page/ForAuthors_JAT?code=nata-site). If you are interested in reviewing manuscripts, create a profile (<http://jat.msubmit.net>) and identify your areas of expertise.

Ultimately, expanding *JAT*'s reach and impact should lead to improved care and outcomes for the patients our readers treat on a daily basis.