

The Enduring Impact of *Pharmacological Reviews*—Editorial

As described by the current editor-in-chief, Lynette Daws (Daws, 2024), *Pharmacological Reviews* was founded in 1949 under the auspices of the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, the British Pharmacology Society, and the Scandinavian Pharmacology Society. Its remit was to produce high-quality, in-depth reviews on trending topics in pharmacology. Its reputation rapidly grew to be known for producing “A-Z” review articles that comprehensively covered the topic area under consideration. More importantly, *Pharmacological Reviews* articles were not simply annotated bibliographies but generally were known as reviews that integrated published information within the specific topic of research, as well as related areas within pharmacology. As such, *Pharmacological Reviews* has long been recognized as one of the top review journals in the field of pharmacology with an extraordinarily high rate of citations.

My first encounter with *Pharmacological Reviews* was as a graduate student during the early 1980s. There was no internet at the time, so if one wanted to keep up with the literature, one spent long hours in the library looking up and photocopying primary research articles. Review articles were extremely helpful in this regard in directing one to relevant publications within one’s research area as well as providing citations while writing manuscripts. My dissertation’s research was in the area of dopamine receptor pharmacology (and still is), and in 1980 I came across an article in *Pharmacological Reviews* titled “Brain Dopamine Receptors” written by the late Philip Seeman, who was a friendly competitor of our laboratory (Seeman, 1980). This article was 85 pages long, contained 1,278 references, and provided “everything you wanted to know about dopamine receptors” at the time. Before eventually drifting out-of-date, this article was referenced by 2,555 publications, and I believe that I personally referenced it well over a dozen times during my preparation of various manuscripts in the 1980s. Importantly, I internalized this manuscript as a model for a *Pharmacological Reviews* article and was inspired by its approach when I began writing review articles of my own. Needless to say, I subsequently kept a close watch on the table of contents of *Pharmacological Reviews*.

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Fast forward nearly 30 years and *Pharmacological Reviews* assumed an even more important role in my life when I became its editor-in-chief. This occurred during a rather momentous time for the journal. Around this period, it was reported that recruiting top-notch authors to assemble comprehensive review articles had become increasingly difficult and that the era of large, comprehensive review articles may be drifting toward extinction (Brass and Feldman, 2009). Indeed, the recruited manuscript pipeline for *Pharmacological Reviews* had become alarmingly thin, and this problem rose to the level of the ASPET Council. At the time, I was a council member in my last year as ASPET secretary-treasurer and remember participating in a rather lively discussion about potentially closing the journal or possibly folding it into another ASPET journal, such as the *Journal for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*, which, ironically, is how *Pharmacological Reviews* originally debuted (Daws, 2024). After much discussion and debate, the ASPET Council did not render a decision on the fate of *Pharmacological Reviews* but rather referred the issue to the ASPET Board of Publication Trustees. The ASPET Board of Publication Trustees decided to tentatively proceed with *Pharmacological Reviews* in its current state and advertised for a new editor-in-chief shortly thereafter. At the time I was an executive editor (one of four, with the late Sam Enna serving as executive editor-in-chief) with *Pharmacology and Therapeutics*, a competitor journal, which published recruited review articles in pharmacology. While the review articles of *Pharmacology and Therapeutics* are not typically as comprehensive as those of *Pharmacological Reviews*, we were doing a rather good business of publishing issues on a monthly basis. I felt that our editorial business model at *Pharmacology and Therapeutics* could be successfully translated to *Pharmacological Reviews* and decided to apply for the editor position. To my surprise, I got the job!

My first job as editor was to rebuild the manuscript pipeline and to do that I needed to rebuild and revitalize the Board of Associate Editors (AEs). For review journals such as *Pharmacological Reviews*, the AEs are actually the “engine” that makes the journal run. They do the hard lifting of recruiting and convincing authors to take on the task of writing the in-depth review articles. As Martin Michel alluded to in an editorial earlier this year (Michel, 2024), there is a certain “art” to the selection and recruitment of

prospective authors to write a review article. However, getting authors to sign on is actually the easiest part, as the more difficult task involves cajoling and convincing the authors to finally write and submit their articles. As Ali Eid noted in his recent editorial (Eid, 2024), this process can take up to 2 years (including manuscript revisions). From an editor-in-chief's perspective, there is also a certain "art" to the recruitment and management of AEs. It is important that the prospective AEs have achieved a degree of stature in their field (although up-and-comers are also effective), which typically means that they have a network of colleagues that represent prospective authors. More importantly is evidence that the prospective AE is willing to expend the effort required for the position. Volunteer work with ASPET or other organizations was always a good predictor in this regard. Within a year after assuming the editor position of *Pharmacological Reviews*, I had doubled the number of AEs, and the manuscript pipeline began to grow. With respect to the rebuild of the AEs, I am proud that, during my time as editor, the journal had the greatest number of international members and had the highest percentage of female members among all of ASPET's editorial boards. However, my proudest achievement, in this regard, was the recruitment of Eric Barker, my immediate successor as editor, and Lyn Daws, the current and first female editor of *Pharmacological Reviews*.

Importantly, as the manuscript pipeline for *Pharmacological Reviews* was rebuilt, quality was not killed for quantity, and the board strived to recruit manuscripts that were comprehensive in scope and had enduring

impact. That tradition continues to this day. The Clarivate Journal Citation Reports rank journals based on their 2-year impact factor and, within the category of pharmacology and pharmacy, *Pharmacological Reviews* has consistently ranked at or near the top over the years with a 2-year impact factor averaging around 21 (Daws, 2024). More importantly, the citation half-life, which reflects the number of years in which half of an article's citations have occurred, has averaged an amazing 10 years, thus placing *Pharmacological Reviews* at the very top of the Journal Citation Reports pharmacology and pharmacy subcategory. This phenomenal citation half-life attests to the enduring impact of *Pharmacological Reviews* and clearly establishes it as the number-one review journal in the field of pharmacology. With continued strong editorial direction, my belief is that the future of *Pharmacological Reviews* will remain bright and I will certainly continue to monitor its table of contents.

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