

## On Being an Editor

Joseph F. O'Donnell

Published online: 25 July 2012  
© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2012

I've always loved being considered a teacher. I love to see that "lightbulb goes on" moment when the learner sees or understands what I am trying to get across, often not as eloquently or meaningfully as I would wish. But, reflecting on such moments helps me to improve. The moments are like the deep connexional moments that Suchman and Matthews [1] described with patients when all of a sudden you realize you are on the same page, that you understand each other. These moments are deeply pleasurable, a state that the psychologist and writer Mihaly Csikszentmihaly calls "flow" [2] when one's task and skill set perfectly line up. These moments are like the ones when the olympic skier hits the "sweet spot" and legs, body, mind, equipment and mountain become one, "in the zone" so to speak.

These moments happen very often when we get outside ourselves to notice them and there are so many of these in a typical day and most importantly, in our work. They keep us coming back for more and help get us out of bed each day.

So too with the position of editor. I love to experience those connexional moments with the authors or the readers. I wish I could do more of these in person, but I save e mails and treasure phone conversations and imagine smiles and think about lives that have been improved by words written in this journal. My greatest editor's joy is to help someone publish their first ever paper. A close second is the genuine thankfulness from an author appreciating a review well done and how what has been said helps to strengthen the paper they have poured their heart into. It's even a joy to watch authors defend what they have tried to say from a

reviewer's slings and arrows. I've made friends all over the world...probably enemies too.... as we reject someone's hard work. I am constantly amazed how the world of cancer education is filled with such good souls..... passionate about making a difference and lessening the burden of suffering from cancer through effective education.

What follows is a job description for the next editor of the Journal. I think we've reached a good place...thanks to Springer we've got a great system of on-line submissions, reviews, publications and we've eliminated our backlog or at least got it to a reasonable level. Plus the Springer folks couldn't be better to work together with. I'm astounded at the quality of the work coming in...from all over. I'm deeply appreciative of the hard work our reviewers and editorial board members put in.

I do think the Journal has "done some good". I've heard from folks who adopted some of the things they've read on articles, gotten grants, gotten promoted, gotten new positions.....and much more. I'll always treasure the foundation Dick Bakemeir built as founding editor and the mentorship he gave me on the journey. I promise to do the same, but also to let the next editor thrive and build their own ideas into the next phase for JCE.

So...apply. It's fun (really) and does provide enough of those moments that make you know you are making a difference. That will get you out of bed each morning!

### References

1. Suchman A, Matthews D (1988) What makes the doctor-patient relationship therapeutic? Experiencing the connexional dimensions of medicine. *Ann Intern Med* 108(1):125–130
2. Csikszentmihaly M (1990) *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. Harper Row, NY

---

J. F. O'Donnell (✉)  
Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth,  
Hanover, NH 03755, USA  
e-mail: joseph.odonnell@dartmouth.edu