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40 Years of the *Clinical Microbiology Newsletter*

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Abstract

On the occasion of our retirement as editors of the *Clinical Microbiology Newsletter (Newsletter)*, which is now in its 40th year, we are feeling a bit nostalgic. As such, we want to pay tribute to all the people who have ensured its success over the years. We want to thank our readers, who helped to make this *Newsletter* so successful, and the authors, who have contributed outstanding lead articles in clinical microbiology. Having worked together for so many years on the *Newsletter* — Betz Forbes for 12 years, Alice Weissfeld for 10 years — we were intrigued by its history. In this article, we share the *Newsletter* origins, the people who have shaped it along the way, and how the *Newsletter*, along with the discipline of clinical microbiology, has changed during the past 40 years.

The Beginnings

One of the great joys of our careers has been getting to know Dr. Josephine (Jo) Morello, who is an icon in the field of clinical microbiology. We interviewed Dr. Morello at her retirement home in Tampa, FL. She explained that the idea for a bimonthly newsletter came from the esteemed Dr. Laurence R. McCarthy [1]. Dr. McCarthy has had an illustrious career in several fields, including clinical (hospital) and industrial microbiology, as well as in the financial arena. He is currently an investment banker, as well as a clinical microbiologist. The third original editor was Dr. Donna Blazevic, who became a practicing attorney in Minneapolis and is now a retired partner at Bassford Remele, a Professional Association.

After some detective work, we tracked down Dr. McCarthy to his home in Charlottesville, VA. He graciously agreed to share his thoughts regarding the *Clinical Microbiology Newsletter* and clinical microbiology.

He explained that, back in 1978, John Lawrence was asked to develop a Medical Book Division by his employers, G.K. Hall Publishers. John was “just a great guy who was always pursuing new

ideas in the publishing industry.” He approached Dr. McCarthy at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and Dr. Morello, who was at the University of Chicago, to create a newsletter covering issues in clinical microbiology, which was a totally new idea in the scientific publishing industry. They were asked to make the articles timely and brief, and to target the working (bench) clinical microbiology audience. These concepts — or as Dr. McCarthy describes them, “a formula that had the right size and right feel” — remain in place 40 years later. While other newsletters have come and gone, this original formula has continued to work well, providing articles on new diagnostic techniques and surveys of how readers handle blood cultures, as well as editorials questioning common procedures and suggesting new ones (<http://www.cmnewsletter.com/content/aims>).

As editors of the *Newsletter* have retired over the years, they have been replaced by other stars of the microbiology world, (see [Table 1](#)). Dr. Paul Granato holds the longest official tenure for the *Newsletter*; because of his longevity, editing skills, and ability to solicit timely and provocative articles from outstanding authors, Dr. Granato has

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played a key role in the *Newsletter's* success. We have no doubt that Dr. Donna Wolk and Dr. Elizabeth Marlowe and our newest editors, Dr. Christopher Doern and Dr. Carey-Ann Burnham, will carry on the *Newsletter's* traditions. It is curious that three key *Newsletter* editors – namely Dr. McCarthy, Jo Morello, and Paul Granato, were all post-doctoral fellows in the clinical microbiology laboratory of the eminent clinical microbiologist, Dr. Paul Ellner. *Newsletter* history is uncanny, as John Lawrence, the husband of yet another eminent clinical mycologist, Dr. Davise Larone, moved to Elsevier, and it was after only a short period that the *Newsletter* followed him to Elsevier, as well!

The Goings-On Behind the Scenes

So, what happens prior to each *Newsletter*? The editors meet annually, with two primary items on the agenda:

- To discuss the status of all solicited lead articles, including whether alternate authors need to be brought in on topics of critical importance and;
- To propose at least 10 new topics, with corresponding authors, for consideration as lead articles for the upcoming year. These proposed topics often spark lively discussion!

Of note, the *Newsletter* also considers unsolicited articles.

Once an article is received by an editor, the manuscript is reviewed for its scientific content and edited for clarity by all the editors.

During the last 10 years, Elsevier assigned oversight of the *Newsletter* to executive publishers from its health and medical sciences division. One such executive publisher, Fiona Macnab, has been at the helm on behalf of the *Newsletter* for the last five years, and has played a critical role in its continued success. Through her oversight, publishing skills, knowledge of the publishing industry, and her understanding of the audience for Elsevier publications, Ms. Macnab has been instrumental in bringing the *Newsletter* to

Table 1. *Clinical Microbiology Newsletter* editors: 1979 to present

Editor	Tenure
Donna Blazevec	1979-1983
Laurence R. McCarthy	1979-1984
Josephine A. Morello	1979-2006
Sally Jo Rubin	1983-1985
Paul A. Granato	1985-present
Ronald Zabransky	1985-2004
Marie B. Coyle	1986-1987
Mary Jane Ferraro	1988-2011
Betty A. Forbes	2005-2017
Alice S. Weissfeld	2007-2017
Donna Wolk	2012-present
Elizabeth A. Marlowe	2016-present
Christopher Doern	2018-present
Carey-Ann Burnham	2018-present

a larger worldwide audience. Moreover, her skills have ensured accessibility to and awareness of our publication.

Other critical contributors to the *Newsletter* are its production editor, Jim Wojno, a guiding force for 20 years, and its copy editor, Elizabeth McGillicuddy, who has been with the *Newsletter* for 16 years. The publishing schedule is a demanding one, with new lead articles published every two weeks, year in and year out. Both are masters of their respective fields and handle their jobs with perfection and aplomb. Because of their skills, the quality of the *Newsletter* articles maintains its high standards.

Change of Scope Over the Last Decade

Over the years, the *Clinical Microbiology Newsletter* editors have prided themselves on the cutting-edge articles they solicit. The world-wide presence of microorganisms that cause the same illnesses and the same challenges for laboratory diagnostics the world over has given the *Newsletter* a global readership. Table 2 lists the 24 topics for lead articles in Volume 1 from 1979, while Table 3 shows the lead articles in Volume 39 from 2017. Josephine Morello wrote a superb review of the *Newsletter's* first 30 years [2]. Writing a “lookback”/historical perspective type of article opened the window, so to speak, for Weissfeld and Forbes to pause and reflect about the various topics of lead articles written by experts in our field. Thus, we would like to briefly share some of our thoughts regarding our discipline within the context of subject matter presented in the and we’d like to follow up with a similar review of the following ten years, to reflect on the variety of topics of lead articles our experts in our field have written about.

Our field

One of the appeals of the *Newsletter* is the format: it is the “*Reader's Digest* for microbiology,” providing an easy read on relevant topics, which allows readers to stay current. To illustrate, newly emerging infectious agents, such as *Cryptococcus gattii*, *Candida auris*, *Aspergillus calidoustus*, *Streptococcus pseudopneumoniae*, and *Trichomonas* species, were featured in *Newsletter* lead articles.

Content innovation and online accessibility

Technology continues to evolve for the *Newsletter* and clinical microbiologists. The *Newsletter's* online presence continues to be refined and updated. Authors can now add AudioSlides to their article, which is an innovation valuable to both the author and reader. They can measure the impact of their article through tools such as PlumX Metrics, which are available at article level at www.cmnewsletter.com, in addition to monitoring the impact of the *Newsletter* via CiteScore. Finally, Social media such as Facebook and Twitter plays a prominent role in increasing the visibility of the *Newsletter*.

The “then and now” and the future

Reflecting on the last decade of *Newsletter* topics, one is struck by the common threads that have been carried over from the *Newsletter's* first 30 years. Clinical microbiologists, by virtue of the profession, must be current with not only understanding the newest mechanisms of antimicrobial resistance that organisms rapidly acquire, but the challenges associated with detecting resistance in

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