EDITORIAL

Clinical Practice in Pediatric Psychology: Looking to the Future

Jennifer Verrill Schurman
Children’s Mercy, Kansas City, Missouri, and University of Missouri-Kansas City
School of Medicine

With this first issue of 2018, I am truly honored to begin my term as Editor of Clinical Practice in Pediatric Psychology (CPPP). In picking up the mantle, I am both humbled and excited by the opportunity to build on the solid foundation set by Inaugural Editors, Dr. Jennifer Shroff Pendley and Dr. Doug Tynan, and their editorial team. CPPP has made an impressive start since the first issue of the journal launched in March, 2013. Manuscript submissions have grown, increasing by 16.5% from 2013 to 2016. Editorial lag has remained rapid with an average time from submission to first decision of <1.5 months, time from manuscript acceptance to print publication of <2.5 months. Circulation has expanded, with individual print subscriptions increasing 21% since 2013 and institutional access (via print and PsycArticles) increasing 9.8%. This equates to over 3,700 institutions currently with access to CPPPs content, with these numbers continuing to grow. Finally, in late 2016, CPPP was evaluated and accepted for indexing in Scopus, the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed research literature.

In summary, CPPP has flourished since its editorial office opened in September 2012, due in large part to the initial vision and commitment of Drs. Pendley and Tynan, followed by the thoughtful and unwavering stewardship of Dr. Pendley, who became sole Editor in January 2015. Dr. Pendley’s example and mentorship have been invaluable to me, both during my time as an Editor-Elect this past year and before that as an Associate Editor on her editorial team. I will be forever grateful for her sharing so generously of her time and experience. One important lesson that I learned, and will take forward with me, is that establishing a new journal involves maintaining a delicate balance of short- and long-term perspective. Specifically, there is a need to encourage and support submissions to fill the journal pages in the short-term, while preserving the scientific rigor and value to the readership that is necessary for long-term success. Maintaining this balance requires constant re-evaluation and adjustment. Maintaining this balance informs many of my goals for the journal, outlined below, as I look ahead to the next 5 years.

Jennifer Verrill Schurman, Division of Developmental & Behavioral Sciences, Children’s Mercy Kansas City, Missouri, and Department of Pediatrics, University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jennifer Verrill Schurman, Division of Developmental & Behavioral Sciences, Children’s Mercy, 2401 Gillham Road, Kansas City, MO 64108. E-mail: jschurman@cmh.edu
Expanding Reach

For a clinical practice journal like CPPP, a critical factor is reach. How can we get the valuable information contained in the journal into the hands of the psychologists, health care professionals, administrators, and legislators who will utilize it? Increasing the visibility of CPPP as a desirable outlet for clinically relevant pediatric psychology and team-based health care work will be a priority over the next few years. I envision CPPP as becoming the “go to” journal for the pediatric psychologist involved in applied activities, including clinical practice, supervision, program development, and/or other teaching/administrative roles. However, the content of CPPP is relevant not only to pediatric psychologists, but also to other medical professionals, health care administrators, funders, journalists, and even the lay public. CPPP has the potential to become a catalytic resource in a time of health care reform when questions abound regarding such issues as health care access, population health, capitated care, pay-for-performance, and integrated medical homes. Efforts to reach this broader audience will take many forms.

First, we will utilize social media to increase exposure and engagement beyond CPPPs current subscriber base and help to shape the dialogue regarding psychology as it relates to the health and well-being of children. For example, use of social media platforms such as Twitter to push out information about publications in real-time has the potential to make conversations richer, more evidence-based, and more multifaceted than has been possible using traditional methods of dissemination and response (e.g., Letters to the Editor), and also compress the timeframe from scientific discovery to implementation in practice more broadly. Ultimately, putting new peer-reviewed results and ideas in the public domain amplifies the scientific and social impact of publications, and can help drive forward interest in CPPP as an influential outlet for clinical science. Other social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, YouTube) can serve complementary roles, such as increasing communication and “warehousing” of relevant information (e.g., special issue announcements, guidance on special sections) and even providing enriched content (e.g., demonstration of a clinical technique, in-depth discussion of intervention application) associated with a recent journal publication. The type of content carried in CPPP is amenable to more active discussion and sharing, and immediate in its potential application. We have already begun this work, but will continue to evolve our social media strategies in consultation with the Society of Pediatric Psychology (SPP) and American Psychological Association (APA) Journals.

One immediate change that authors will see is a standard request for an “Implications for Impact” statement with all submissions. This statement asks authors to package their own research findings for distribution on social media channels and other outlets. In this way, authors are granted greater control over how their work will be interpreted by and impact key audiences globally and locally who are interested in the physical health and psychological well-being of children-practitioners, policymakers, news media, and members of the public. Ultimately, this approach is intended to improve uptake of publication content. Quantifiable demonstration of the reach and influence of CPPP also will be important to maintain a pipeline of high-quality manuscripts for the future. Although CPPP goes to all members of the SPP—that includes a mix of clinical researchers, clinicians, and scientist-practitioners—the journal really is of particular interest, by design, to the clinical professionals. Ultimately, the biggest impact of CPPP may be through influencing applications to clinical practice and service organization/delivery, and not measured fully by traditional metrics such
as journal “impact factor” (IF). However, IF value remains a recognized proxy for a journal’s academic caliber, and establishing an initial IF will be a clear goal over the next year. As a first step, we applied for and were granted indexing in Scopus, an academic database that tracks citations and offers a measure similar to an impact factor. We also will look to index in other databases, such as PubMed, in the near future to further the reach and reputation necessary to support long-term growth.

While citation counts demonstrate the long-term contribution an article makes to the scientific literature, other article-level metrics (i.e., “altmetrics”)—such as number of online downloads, related blog posts, Facebook “likes,” and social media shares (e.g., ResearchGate, Twitter) can be used alongside traditional benchmarks such as IF to present a richer picture of how an article (and its associated publication) are being discussed, shared, and used. In short, measurement of altmetrics can be used to capture the immediacy and socialization of articles being published by a journal. Within this context, it is encouraging that we have observed a high number of article-level downloads since the inception of CPPP. Fortunately, this movement to collect and publicize altmetrics is gaining momentum and even mainstream citation databases (e.g., Scopus) are now making this information routinely available at the article level. In the future, I hope to make altmetrics available at the journal level to supplement traditional metrics and more comprehensively gauge the evolving influence and reach of CPPP.

Enhancing Scientific Quality

CPPP plays a unique role in the public health landscape. It lives at the intersection between more traditional controlled research and clinical application, as well as at the intersection between psychology and medicine. Ultimately, CPPP appeals to a wide range of consumers, including psychologists and medical providers, as well as other health care professionals interested in the physical health and psychological well-being of children. Although CPPP, by design, is at its core a clinical practice journal, we will of course continue to attend to the scientific quality of the work accepted for publication. Research is the very foundation of effective clinical practice and meaningful contribution to the evidence-base will ensure our reputation, standing, and influence in pediatric health care.

In the past, we have solicited expert commentaries in the form of “how to” guides for writing up specific types of studies, including qualitative research (Alderfer & Sood, 2016), quality improvement (Schurman, Gayes, Slosky, Hunter, & Pino, 2015), and case studies (Ernst, Barhight, Bierenbaum, Piazza-Waggner, & Carter, 2013). We encourage authors to consult these publications and have referenced them within the Instructions for Authors on our Web site for convenience. We will continue to look for opportunities to support high-caliber publications using this strategy, as well as in other ways.

A more recent initiative meant to enhance scientific quality by minimizing duplicate and/or piecemeal publication is the use of iThenticate. Rolled out in late 2017, iThenticate is integrated into CPPP’s peer review Web site, Editorial Manager, and automatically flags the degree of overlap between a manuscript and other existing sources at the time of submission. Information provided by iThenticate will be routinely reviewed by editorial staff in an effort to ensure that manuscripts adhere to the highest ethical and academic standards. When concerns about potential overlap arise, whether with their own work or the work of others, authors will be notified as part of the editorial decision letter.
More generally, the growth seen in submissions to CPPP has allowed us to become gradually more selective about the manuscripts accepted, with our rejection rate rising accordingly. This is a positive and necessary step, as we want to ensure that every article published in CPPP is of the highest possible quality. Increasing scientific rigor will contribute to the establishment of a positive impact factor, as discussed above, as well as enhance the reputation of CPPP as a premiere outlet for clinically oriented research and practice issues in pediatric psychology. In the future, we will look to increasing page size, issue length, and/or issues per volume as submission quantity and quality supports.

Developing Our Reviewer Pool

Maintaining a committed base of excellent reviewers also is critical in supporting the publication of high-quality peer-reviewed work. While CPPP currently enjoys a skilled and passionate groups of reviewers, I intend to reach out to faculty at conferences, via the listserv, and through other networking options to further enrich the breadth and depth of expertise in our reviewer pool. We also will retain our commitment to our Mentored Review Program, through which we strive to educate trainees and professionals on editorial processes to better prepare them to be the next generation of reviewers and editors in our field. While this program may be of most interest to trainees and early career faculty, we also are interested in facilitating mentoring relationships for those individuals with a high level of enthusiasm and content expertise, but relatively less editorial experience, at any career level. Finally, we will continue to work with SPP Annual Conference (SPPAC) and APA conference planners to offer author, reviewer, and editor guidance via workshops, professional development panels, and so forth. To date, we have joined with Editors of our sister journal, the Journal of Pediatric Psychology, to provide two such sessions at SPPAC 2017 and SPPAC 2018. A similar offering is planned to occur in conjunction with APA Journals staff at APA Convention, 2018.

The Role of Special Issues, Coordinated Calls, and Topical Submissions

We will continue to recruit Guest Editors who are nationally recognized as experts in their fields to spearhead the development of timely special issues, alone or in coordination with companion journals (e.g., the Journal of Pediatric Psychology, the Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics). Our first special issue of 2018 will be “Economic Evaluation” with Meghan McGrady serving in the role of Guest Editor. This is certainly a timely topic, as the economics of service provision have certainly come front and center in recent years within the context of a still-evolving health care system. Pediatric psychologists will increasingly need to demonstrate improvements in key pediatric health outcomes alongside evidence of medical cost offset. Health promotion and early intervention needs to be part of this. Our field will need to capture meaningful data and utilize it to advocate for changes to financial reimbursement models, including proactive contracting with various agencies (e.g., insurers, schools, community, or government agencies), if the field is to remain vibrant and viable. It is no longer enough to know that an intervention is effective; we also need to know that it saves more than it costs to deliver. Our special issue on economic evaluation will provide a step in this direction, with emphasis on the “how to” and “why” that is needed to spur future work in this area.
The second special issue of 2018 will be “The Global Reach of Pediatric Psychology” with Laura Simons serving in the role of Guest Editor. This will be an exciting opportunity for researchers and practitioners to learn about psychological aspects of children’s health and illness across cultures and to share strategies for health promotion, as well as injury and illness prevention, across international boundaries. I look forward to viewing pediatric psychology and issues of diversity through this global lens. Further, I hope that this will be a first step in actively encouraging submissions that push the boundaries in terms of examining and/or including diverse populations, whether from authors within the United States or across the globe. In keeping with the global emphasis, this special issue will be promoted broadly both nationally and internationally, including in conjunction with the European Conference on Pediatric Psychology to be held in Ghent, Belgium in September 2018.

Additional special issues are actively being planned for 2019 and beyond. First, there will be a coordinated special issue with our sister journal, the Journal of Pediatric Psychology, on eHealth/mHealth with Emily Law and Stephen Schueller as Guest Editors on the CPPP side (manuscript submissions due May 1, 2018). Special issues on transgender populations (letters of intent due July 2, 2018; see call for papers elsewhere in this issue) and primary care psychology (TBD) will follow. Given the enthusiasm for our Special Section on Ethics, we will continue this section and endeavor to include an ethics-focused article in each print issue. We also will continue to have open calls for topical submissions to stimulate discussion and interest in current issues and/or hot topics, as well as broaden the reach of CPPPs coverage and readership. As always, we also welcome general submissions and look forward to representing work across the landscape of clinical practice in pediatric psychology.

Finally, as our archive grows, we will begin to pull together “virtual collections” comprised of past publications on a related topic that span issues and/or volumes of the journal. These collections will be promoted via social media, including our Twitter and journal Web site. Links to the relevant e-pubs will be accompanied by new commentaries solicited from experts in the area, whenever possible, to provide current context and future directions for research and clinical application.

Engaging Our Readership

CPPPs greatest asset has been the sustained enthusiasm of our readers, authors, and reviewers. For my part, it will remain important to publish articles that readers want to read and find clinically valuable, rather than pieces that may be scientifically sound but of limited interest or relevance to the clinically oriented readership. I will strive to maintain CPPPs emerging tradition as a forum for fair and balanced presentations of important issues, including those that may be controversial, as they arise. I also hope to follow Dr. Pendley’s example in actively engaging, supporting, and promoting CPPPs authors, reviewers, and editorial team members during my tenure.

With this in mind, we would be wise to consider the voice of our readers in strategically planning for the future. In the first half of 2018, a survey is set to arrive in each subscriber’s email inbox. It is my hope that this readership survey may provide insight that guides the further development of the journal, such as: expansion of content in special sections; increased coverage of select topics via solicited commentaries, open topical calls, or special issues; or other aspects of the publication and/or its management that could be targets for future growth and development. The continued satisfaction of our readership and contributors is
imperative to help CPPP remain viable over the long-term. We want your help to ensure that published articles stay true to the mission of CPPP and reflect the needs of our readership.

As eloquently stated in the recent post dictum by Dr. Pendley (Pendley, 2017), “it takes a village to launch a journal.” In continuing this endeavor, it is a privilege to be surrounded by a team of outstanding Associate Editors (Elizabeth McQuaid and Meghan McAuliffe Lines), Ethics Special Section Editor (W. Hobart Davies), and Editorial Board members. All of these individuals were chosen for their complementary expertise, the balance of scientific rigor and clinical experience they bring, their history of providing exemplary reviews and constructive feedback to authors, and—perhaps most importantly—their belief in the mission and values of this journal. They are joined by a remarkable and committed team from the APA Journals office. Although I cannot name everyone here, I would remiss if I did not single out our Managing Director, Mare Meadows, and our Manuscript Coordinator, Steve Barnold, who are always available to answer questions, provide instrumental support, and ensure the smooth running of CPPP on a daily basis. Together with the editorial team, they truly make the day-to-day work of this journal possible.

In summary, I am optimistic about the future of CPPP and look forward to seeing what we can accomplish, together, in the next 5 years. While it is an honor to be responsible for shepherding CPPP through the next leg of its development, this effort can only be successful with continued engagement from all of you. Please keep those manuscripts coming, keep saying yes to review requests, keep bringing the journal to the attention of colleagues, keep the dialogue going on social media, and keep reaching out to our editorial team (at conferences, or via email or social media at any time) with your thoughts and ideas. I look forward to hearing from you.

References


Received December 21, 2017
Accepted December 21, 2017