

## *Blood* and the American Society of Hematology in 2008: looking back and moving forward

It is a great honor today to begin my term as the 10th Editor-in-Chief of *Blood*, following in the footsteps of editors whose vision and hard work over the past 6 decades have shaped *Blood* into the resounding success it is today. I particularly want to honor Sandy Shattil, the outgoing Editor-in-Chief, whose consistent and impassioned commitment to the scientific quality and integrity of this journal is unmatched, and a gift to readers and authors over the past 5 years. I also want to thank Sandy for his patient and generous mentoring since I was selected as the next Editor-in-Chief. As an Associate Editor (AE) for the past 10 years, I can barely remember when *Blood* was not an integral part of my professional life. I am grateful that Ken Kaushansky had the confidence to pick a relatively untested and junior hematologist to be a part of his editorial team back in 1998.

Today we bid farewell and thank a group of AEs who will soon wonder what to do with all their reclaimed hours, no longer handling up to 300 submissions per year, including Jerry Groopman, Willem Fibbe, and Tom Ganz after serving a full decade each, as well as George Broze and Brian Druker. I am very grateful that Grover Bagby, Malcolm Brenner, Michael Caligiuri, Mohan Narla, Mortimer Poncz, David Scadden, and Martin Tallman have agreed to provide continuity and support by remaining as AEs for second terms. And we welcome Richard van Etten, John Gribben, Mary Dinuer, Keith Stewart, David Lillicrap, and Genoveffa Franchini to the editorial team. All of us continue to depend on the efficiency and commitment to excellence of the *Blood* staff, led by Eleanore Tapscott, the Director of Publishing for the American Society of Hematology (ASH), Anna Trudgett, the Managing Editor, Todd Reitzel, the Production Manager, and many others. The journal could not exist without the “just say yes” attitude of our expert reviewers, particularly those on the Editorial Board. Many review 10 or more manuscripts per year, but special thanks to John Byrd, who handled 46 papers for the journal in 2006, and to Jerry Spivak, who reviewed 26 papers in 2007!

This year ASH will celebrate its 50th Anniversary. The histories and achievements of the Society and of *Blood* are intertwined due to the many individuals involved in both leading ASH and editing the journal, the status of the journal as a home to many of the most important scientific and clinical milestones in hematology of the past decades, and the more recent self-publication of *Blood* by the Society. *Blood* will help ASH celebrate this anniversary year with a series of 50th Anniversary Reviews, one or more per issue, summarizing hematologic milestones of the past half-century in a historical context, in addition to providing up-to-date analysis of the current status and future directions of each area. Invited authors include some whose achievements span the entire 50-year period, including Ernest Beutler and Donald Metcalf, whose contributions kick off the series, along with up-and-coming researchers who were not yet born when the Society was founded in 1958. Each author will also describe briefly how they came to choose hematology as a career, in hopes of informing and inspiring younger clinicians and scientists just entering or sampling our discipline. In this first issue of the Anniversary year, we provide a

Perspective describing the history of the Society and the journal, written by Ernest Jaffe, the 3rd Editor of *Blood* and past president of ASH, and Ken Kaushansky, the 8th Editor and the current ASH President.

By any measure, *Blood* continues to grow and thrive. In 2006, 5102 articles were submitted, and based on the first half of 2007, these numbers are predicted to stay at the same level this year. The journal is on track to publish the largest number of pages ever: 11 156 split over 26 biweekly issues. The weight of each issue is approaching the maximum that readers (and postal workers!) can handle. During the first half of 2007, only 26% of submitted papers could be accepted for publication. This rate has been relatively stable for the past several years, and is assessed and discussed frequently by the editors to ensure as uniform a commitment to subject matter and quality as possible.

For authors, time to publication is a major consideration in their choice of journal and is critical to their career development and ability to obtain funding. With institution of the online manuscript submission and tracking system, and aided by organized and dedicated central *Blood* office staff and AEs, the average time to first decision for reviewed manuscripts is now less than 1 month, and the average time to acceptance for all manuscripts is only 39 days. The editorial staff continues to monitor every step of the process and strives to shorten these timelines even further. Accepted papers are posted online daily as First Edition papers and are available on the *Blood* website and via PubMed within days. With a recent reconfiguration of the production workflow, time to print publication is being slashed, with accepted articles appearing in print within 7 to 8 weeks compared with the previous 4 to 6 months. Those readers who noticed that some of the issues seemed particularly heavy the past several months were not showing signs of decreased muscle tone! The shift to the faster production path has meant that a significant backlog of accepted articles had to be placed into several “supersized” issues in the last quarter of 2007 and in 2008. And finally, as flawed as the ISI Impact Factor is as a sole measure of journal quality, it remains important to potential authors and their academic departments. Thus we are pleased that *Blood*'s Impact Factor has increased to 10.37, the highest for any hematology journal, and one of the highest for any subspecialty medical journal. *Blood* is ranked in the top 100 journals from among more than 6000 journals indexed by ISI.

For readers, we will strive to enhance their usage and enjoyment of the journal. The popular Inside *Blood* commentaries, providing background, context, and an assessment of 6 to 10 highlighted articles per issue, will continue to be featured and enhanced. The number of data supplements provided online has increased exponentially over the past 5 years, with 956 supplements linked to 308 articles in just the first half of 2007, compared with a total of 177 for all of 2004. Besides video clips, much more detailed methods can be provided in supplements, as well as direct access to large and complex datasets such as raw gene expression analyses. As a recent initiative, in 2006 *Blood* started to scan all gels and micrographs in accepted papers to ensure the integrity of the

published data and to educate authors about the hazards of inappropriate image manipulation. We recently modified sizing of figures, enlarging them into a range that should be more comfortably legible for most readers. The *Blood* website has been redesigned with numerous navigation enhancements. To further highlight the best research we publish, we plan to pursue more active communication with the media regarding important findings published in *Blood*. We also hope to institute new online venues for communication between authors and readers regarding specific articles.

The next 5 years almost certainly will present challenges and result in evolution of certain aspects of the journal. The complex issues surrounding “open access” are not going away. *Blood* and ASH have thus far been active, practical, and clear-thinking in their response to governmental and private funding agencies, making all content older than 12 months freely available, releasing 5 clinically relevant articles per issue immediately, and providing free access in the developing world and to any patients on request. More than 95% of all *Blood* content is freely available. Ten years ago most of us would have predicted that by 2008, print issues of *Blood* would be historical artifacts to be dug out of dusty basements only for the 50th Anniversary celebration. However, reader surveys indicate that a majority of subscribers and ASH members value the physical journal and do not favor a shift to online-only publication. I am

certain the *Blood* editors and staff, ASH Publication and Executive committees, and ASH staff will continue to work together to ensure the continued success of the journal and to respond to these and other challenges.

We remain focused on the core function of *Blood* as a top-quality, balanced, and highly relevant journal for everyone interested in the blood and its diseases. The journal must continue to provide a home for the best research and writing, whether from basic scientists or clinicians; whether focused on hematologic malignancies or hemostasis and thrombosis, or any of the other subject areas *Blood* embraces; whether pediatric or adult; whether from the United States or abroad. The primary strength of *Blood* is this breadth and our stubborn insistence as both a journal and a professional society that we are stronger than the sum of our parts. We must continue to make the science relevant and comprehensible to clinicians, and hope that clinical observations continue to stimulate new directions for our science. The ability to literally take the blood or the marrow from the bedside to the bench is what attracted many of us to this discipline in the first place, and I and the rest of the editors and *Blood* staff will do everything in our power to ensure that *Blood* will continue to promote and protect these connections.

**Cynthia Dunbar, MD**  
*Editor-in-Chief*



Lake Champlain, Westport, New York. Photograph by Alexa Cerf.