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Editorial

Transitions and Looking Ahead

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After 25 years as editor of the *American Journal of Infection Control*, I will be stepping down in 2020. I have been the editor for one-third of my life, the *Journal* has been one of the highlights of my professional career, and I want to express my gratitude for the extraordinary opportunity I have been given.

Some years ago, I read an article in *The Washington Post* that was so striking that I remembered it and wondered whether I would ever have occasion to use it. I think this is the time. It was an account of a 79-year-old woman who spent years taking care of her infirm husband. Apparently, he continuously taunted her with his former affairs so eventually she beat him to death with his plastic bedpan.

What does this have to do with *AJIC*? As with this bedpan case, now is the time to find new ways to use old things. As *AJIC* moves forward, it's time to look at what can be, without the constraints of simply what has been. We are in an era that suffers from compartmentalization and a sense of entitlement. We create artificial separations—between work and non-work, academics and clinicians, infection prevention and quality management, physicians and non-physicians.

Likewise, we have unrealistic views of what we are due. We don't see anyone punching in their hours of relaxing, watching TV, or engaging in personal interests, but how sad is it to scrupulously keep track of the number of hours we "work"? It's as though work is only done to get to do what one really enjoys, rather than being an opportunity to live out our interests and beliefs. For me, the *AJIC* editorship has, in fact, been a satisfying and meaningful reflection and outlet for my basic belief in our ethical obligation to share what we learn and move the field forward.

Over and over, just when I thought I had mastered something well enough to relax a bit, there were new things to learn. I have given up the myth that any of us will ever be experts at anything, but isn't that what life is about? We live in a society that is fast paced, technologically focused, and changing with lightning speed, and we feel like we are finally getting it just when it's time to move on. What we create in the *Journal* requires constant assessment and renewal. Are we still

in touch with our mission and values in this work? Are the tasks we are performing solving problems and improving things?

To everything there is a season; this is an exciting time for *AJIC*, and I am excited about this next transition and committed to using whatever skills I have to continue to support the *Journal* and my colleagues. I'd like to end by sharing a story written by my grandson, Nate White, when he was 9 years old:

Icky, Blicky, and Sticky were three bad guys with very bad ideas. They had two gross pets named Trashy and Scratchy. These guys never had a single good idea in their life. In fact, they never wanted to. One day, Blicky had a bad idea—to never wash his hands ever again—and Icky and Sticky agreed. Three months later they found out that it was truly a bad idea. They were rolling on the floor with the flu; mumps; measles; rabies; hepatitis A, C, and B; bubonic plague; and gingivitis. From this experience, they learned to always have good ideas rather than bad.

Three months later the house was clean, Trashy and Scratchy were squeaky clean, and Icky, Blicky, and Sticky's teeth were practically shining. But Sticky felt something was wrong, so he visited a spiritual guru. The guru said, "You must maintain the perfect balance between dirty and clean."

"How do I do that?" asked Sticky.

"That you must figure out yourself," said the guru. "But I will give you two gifts to help you on your journey to perfect cleanliness. The first gift is a bag of dirt to splatter everywhere. The second is a duster to clean it up. With these gifts you will splatter, unsplatter, splatter, unsplatter. I wish you luck," he said as Sticky left.

So, my colleagues—our publishers and marketing experts, those who have served on the Editorial Board, those who have submitted and published manuscripts in *AJIC*, and our readers—take it from here and godspeed on your journey!

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