

The *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* and Its Relation to NCI: Fact Sheet

Key Points

- The original *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* was created by the NCI in the 1940s to focus attention specifically on cancer research by providing the first venue for publication of exclusively cancer-related scientific papers.
- First Editor-in-Chief Robert Wittes, M.D., gave the Journal its current look. He instituted a rapid, rigorous peer review process, set a high standard for study acceptance, and ensured that articles in the Journal would span the entire spectrum of cancer research and draw the interest of scientists in many fields.
- Under the terms of a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement with NCI, which began in August 1996 and ran for about five years, Oxford University Press gradually took over responsibility for the Journal and became the sole owner at the end of the privatization process.

1. Why was the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* created by the National Cancer Institute (NCI)?

The original *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* was created by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in the 1940s to focus attention specifically on cancer research by providing the first venue for publication of exclusively cancer-related scientific papers. The journal's name was later changed officially to the name of JNCI. In the 1960s, NCI inaugurated a second journal, *Cancer Treatment Reports*, dedicated to clinical cancer research. In 1987, NCI, under Director Vincent DeVita, M.D., decided to discontinue both JNCI and *Cancer Treatment Reports*. In March 1988, initially designed as an experiment, NCI inaugurated a new *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, named to reflect the long lineage of scientific journal publications by NCI and to reflect the original name from the 1940s (this version was never referred to as 'JNCI'). The new Journal would be dedicated to the rapid publication of the highest-quality cancer-related scientific papers from all areas of research.

2. Who has been responsible for the editorial content of the Journal?

The new *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* was launched in March 1988 with Robert Wittes, M.D., then of NCI, as editor-in-chief. As is characteristic of scientific journal publishing, the scientific content of the Journal has always been the exclusive purview of its editor-in-chief, with advice from peer reviewers, associate editors, and journal staff. The internal Journal systems were at first modeled on the methods used at *Science*, with the helpful cooperation and assistance of the *Science* staff, for manuscript processing and review. The systems were later tailored to the specific needs of the Journal and became a model for other journals.

The new Journal also contained a news section that was originally developed by Paul van Nevel. It remained under his direction as the head of the NCI Office of Cancer Communications until late in the more than 5-year Journal privatization process. Julianne Chappell was the founding managing editor of the Journal and was responsible for setting editorial standards that emphasized clarity of presentation and accessibility to a broad audience. Privatization of the Journal via a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement (CRADA) grew out of her vision.

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Daniel Ihde, M.D., the second editor-in-chief, expanded efforts to achieve high quality in terms of science and exposition and fostered another innovation: the senior editor function. Senior editors with scientific and editorial expertise brought professional-level oversight to bear on the development of every scientific paper from the point of receipt through the review and revision processes to the point of publication. This function, modeled after systems used at a handful of the highest-level scientific journals worldwide, has been central to the Journal's success. It was under Ihde's tenure that the Journal first reached the rank of number one primary cancer-research journal in the world (determined on the basis of scientific citation) and surpassed a number of wide-circulation medical journals, including the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The third and current editor-in-chief is Barnett Kramer, M.D., formerly of NCI and currently head of the Office of Disease Prevention at the National Institutes of Health. He began serving as editor-in-chief in 1994, continued the traditions of selectivity, oversight, and high editorial standards, and has instituted statistical review of every paper with quantitative information. Under his tenure, the Journal (now known as *JNCI* under the ownership of Oxford University Press) reached even higher status as a frequently cited source of scientific information, ranking among the top biomedical journals in the world.

Over the 13 years the Journal was associated with the NCI, the editorial board changed and grew as well; it initially consisted primarily of NCI scientists and subsequently grew to include scientists from outside NCI and eventually from outside the United States. These outside scientists now represent a majority of the editorial board.

3. What is the history of the CRADA between NCI and Oxford University Press?

Under the terms of a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement with NCI, which began in August 1996 and ran for about five years, Oxford University Press (OUP) gradually took over responsibility for the Journal and became the sole owner at the end of the privatization process. Throughout that process, each party to the agreement contributed a portion of the resources, with OUP assuming a greater portion as time progressed. At the end of the CRADA, OUP assumed full ownership and all costs. The *JNCI* now is not supported nor controlled by the U.S. government.

The two main goals of the CRADA were transfer and maintenance of the systems and standards responsible for the quality of the Journal and the development of an enhanced online version of the Journal. The Journal has been available online since 1997, and full back contents are now available online starting with 1996. The contents of the online Journal were identical to those in the printed version until 2002, when online data supplements began to be added. The enhanced online version of the Journal, *JNCI Cancer Spectrum*, is now available at <http://jnci.oxfordjournals.org/>.

JNCI Cancer Spectrum includes NCI's Physician Data Query (PDQ®) database; cancer statistics from NCI's Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results program; a database of oncology drugs from the *Physicians' Desk Reference*; abstracts of Cochrane Reviews (systematic evidence analyses) on cancer-related topics; an enhanced cancer news page; topical collections of "classic" (highly cited) articles (some with accompanying perspective articles), review articles, and book reviews; a searchable calendar of events; and a collection of useful links to cancer-related Web sites.

4. Why is the magazine still called the Journal of the National Cancer Institute when it is solely owned by OUP?

The value of a journal is, in large part, in its name. Additionally, citation history carries over on the basis of name and if the name changes, the citation history stops being included in citation reports. The CRADA was for the purpose of privatizing the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, so NCI could not withhold the name.

5. How did NCI fund the creation of the Journal?

The Journal was not produced with dedicated funding. It was produced with discretionary funds from the NCI Office of the Director.

6. Why did NCI discontinue its financing of the Journal?

At the time the decision was made to transfer the Journal to the private sector, the Journal was produced in hard-copy form only. In order to survive as a journal with the advent of the Internet, an electronic version was required. To produce both hard-copy and electronic versions, the budget for the Journal would have to have been doubled or tripled.

NCI had to weigh the costs associated with producing both hard-copy and online versions of the Journal in view of competing priorities, and it had to consider whether producing a peer-reviewed scientific journal was an activity the NCI should continue to engage in when journal publishing is handled predominantly by the private sector. Ultimately, the decision was to discontinue NCI's funding and transfer responsibility to a publisher outside the federal government who would be willing and able to maintain the quality of the Journal and, therefore, its value to the cancer community.

7. How can I contact the current staff of the JNCI?

To contact the JNCI, please call or write to:

Editorial Office:

Journal of the National Cancer Institute
8120 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 500
Bethesda, MD 20814-2743
Telephone: 301-841-1270
Fax: 301-841-1299

Reprints Requests:

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Media Inquiries (reporters only)

Telephone: 301-841-1287
Email: jncimedia@oxfordjournals.org

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Related NCI materials and Web pages:

- About NCI Home Page (<http://www.cancer.gov/aboutnci>)
- Cancer Library Home Page (<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/literature>)

How can we help?

We offer comprehensive research-based information for patients and their families, health professionals, cancer researchers, advocates, and the public.

- **Call** NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)
- **Visit** us at <http://www.cancer.gov> or <http://www.cancer.gov/espanol>
- **Chat** using LiveHelp, NCI's instant messaging service, at <http://www.cancer.gov/livehelp>
- **E-mail** us at cancergovstaff@mail.nih.gov
- **Order** publications at <http://www.cancer.gov/publications> or by calling 1-800-4-CANCER
- **Get help** with quitting smoking at 1-877-44U-QUIT (1-877-448-7848)

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