

2. Editorial: Excellence and rarity—an evaluation of *Dermatopathology: Practical & Conceptual* with Almut Böer, M.D. as Editor-in-Chief, 2004–2008

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Excellence and rarity

During the last five years, from 2004 to 2008 inclusive, Almut Böer, M.D., has been the Editor-in-Chief of *Dermatopathology: Practical & Conceptual*. It has been my pleasure to work with her, as Associate Editor and Book Review Editor, during that period. Dr. Böer asked for my opinion about the Journal during her tenure, and I am glad to make it known to her and to the readers.

The Journal became "live" on the Internet in January 2002, two years before Dr. Böer became Editor-in-Chief. Initially, prior issues available in print were not available via the website. They became accessible via the Internet during Dr. Böer's years as Editor-in-Chief. Currently, the entire Journal is available on any computer with Internet access; it is searchable, and coupled to this is the rich content of Derm101.com, which has enormous potential for anyone serious about dermatology and dermatopathology. The subscription price is low, compared to most journals, and it is available to residents and fellows either free or for a nominal cost.

In the last five years, from January/March 2004 through October/December 2008, there have been 20 issues of the Journal and some 500 articles written about the spectrum of dermatopathology and the history of medicine in general (with dermatopathology as the prime focus of that history). The Journal is also dedicated, often explicitly, to topics of philosophy, which consists of five classical branches: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, and esthetics—topics that are represented well throughout its "pages."

I have not counted the number of authors who have contributed to the Journal in the last 5 years, but as of Issue 4 from 2005, there were 104 authors from 17 countries in the first 2 years of Dr. Böer's tenure as Editor-in-Chief, according to her own count. There must be many more after 5 years. Throughout its existence, from 1995 to this writing, over 850 authors have contributed to the Journal.

As a rule, each issue begins with an editorial, often penned by Dr. Böer, thus setting the tone for each issue. At the end of each issue, Dr. Ackerman, the Journal's founder, routinely discusses various topics on ethics, specifically the ethics of medicolegal cases and unethical practices in medical publishing, to name only two topics that serve his passion. Sandwiched between are a myriad of articles that run the gamut of historical expositions of concepts, quandaries, observations, integrations, presentations of primary case material in the advancement or clarification of concepts, medicolegal queries and cases, and usually one book review evaluated by two reviewers with comment by the authors and by me.

One will not find "original articles" in the Journal, not at least in the way that phrase is used in most medical journals. Why is this? It is because, as explained by Dr. Böer in her article titled "What, really, is original?" (2007;13[03]:Article 2): "It is quite striking that, on consultation of numerous dictionaries, no definition can be found of the term 'original article.'" [1] What is often meant by that phrase is an article that contains information on case material with analysis and exposition, the particular cases having never been discussed in publications previously. The concepts addressed by such articles, however, may not refer to new concepts and may not have anything original to offer. Unfortunately, the presentation of material in this manner is often formulaic and, frankly, boring, often with not a single first-handed observation or conclusion. Rather, it is often an exercise in news reporting with a rehash of older literature, which was, itself, an example of a similar "infinite" regress, adding nothing original and advancing no unifying principle. In contrast, this Journal has prided itself, from the time of its inception by Dr. Ackerman, and continuing with Dr. Böer, that articles are placed in sections, each with the potential to be original (conceptually and practically) in its own way, whether it refers to newly published case reports, reviews of historical literature, or reviews of books.

Dermatopathology: Practical & Conceptual is one of the most innovative journals in the field of medicine, cutting across many disciplines, yet focusing on a single one: dermatopathology. Despite this, it seems to be the bastard child of the medical journal industry; its editors and contributors are proud of it, but others, at the periphery, seem to shun its existence. Whether it contains articles by geniuses or fools, one would not know unless he or she has taken the time to read it for its sweeping, abstract approach (the conceptual part) and to apply specifically the content within it in daily practice (the practical part). The not so secret "secret" is that tens of thousands read its electronic pages every year, despite its censorship from the National Library of Medicine database, PubMed.

It is notorious that the National Library of Medicine has chosen the position of censorship for *Dermatopathology: Practical & Conceptual* (and I mean *authentic* censorship, which is the government's restriction of speech, press, or both). In an editorial from 2006 (Volume 12, #2) titled "No comment," Dr. Böer reported on her first experience with the National Library of Medicine regarding the prospects of having the Journal indexed for retrieval of articles via PubMed, the medical journal website of the NLM. [2] That experience ended in December 2005, when the NLM, in a rejection letter by Sheldon Kotzin, the Executive Editor of MEDLINE, stated that "The Committee recently met and reviewed a number of journal titles including *Dermatopathology: Practical and Conceptual*. The indexing priority assigned to the journal by the Committee was not high enough for the title to be indexed by the Library at this time."

Despite this setback, Dr. Böer continued to pursue the goal of indexing only to be rejected again (DPC 2008; 14(1) Article 2). [3]

Even with this, the Journal has continued to be innovative and radical, radical meaning *from the root or fundamental* in this context, as was its original Latin intent.

I could laud the Journal for hours. It is, however, unnecessary to do so. It speaks for itself. Indulge me for a moment as I list some of the more interesting titles found within it in the last 5 years:

A brief history of dermatitis herpetiformis: T.C. Gilchrist's early description (1895) of dermatitis herpetiformis histopathology: The importance of being famous and of having good relationships if you want your opinion considered by Camilla Vassallo, M.D., Raffaello Cananzi, M.D., and Giovanni Borroni, M.D., 2004 [4]

History, Ethics, & Academe: Ethical and academic or not? by A. Bernard Ackerman, M.D., 2004 [5]

New Quandary: Hypodermatitis sclerodermiformis, lipodermatosclerosis, and sclerosing panniculitis? by Sharona Yasar, 2004 [6]

Understanding "livedo vasculitis": Part I—A glossary, in historical perspective, of terms related to "livedo" and "livedo vasculitis" by K. C. Nischal, M.D. and Almut Böer, M.D., 2005 [7]

New Observation: Herpes incognito, most commonly, is herpes zoster—and its pattern histopathologic is distinctive! by Almut Böer, M.D., Nina Herder, Norbert Blödorn-Schlicht, M.D., and Thomas Falk, 2005 [8]

New Heights: An assist to the next (10th) edition of "Lever's" by Renata A. Joffe, M.D., 2005 [9]

New Heights: Understanding "livedo vasculitis": Part II—Findings morphologic in "livedo vasculitis" by K. C. Nischal, M.D. and Almut Böer, M.D., 2006 [10]

Understanding "livedo vasculitis": Part III—Considerations about etiology and pathogenesis by K. C. Nischal, M.D. and Almut Böer, M.D., 2006 [11]

New Heights: An unabridged history of the ABCDs by Michael Wile, M.D., 2006 [12]

New Heights: Dermatoscopy: Introduction of a new algorithmic method based on pattern analysis for diagnosis of pigmented skin lesions by Harald Kittler, M.D., 2007 [13]

New Quandary: Atypical pityriasis rosea, atypical fibroxanthoma, atypical mycobacteria, atypical cell, atypical mitotic figure, architectural atypia, etc. by A. Bernard Ackerman, M.D., Veronica Dinu, M.D., and Mark A. Hurt, M.D., 2007 [14]

New Heights: Most "large dysplastic nevi" are really small congenital nevi! by Yaqin Zhang, M.D. and A. Bernard Ackerman, M.D., 2007 [15]

General Pathology: Adenomatous polyp of the colon is carcinoma in situ—Part 1: Historical perspective by Masoud Asgari, M.D. and Sheng Chen, M.D., Ph.D., 2007 [16]

Leukemia cutis: Clinicopathologic study of 34 patients by Sushil Pande, M.D., Betina Werner, M.D., and Almut Böer, M.D., 2007 [17]

Book Review: Spitz's nevus: Reassessment critical, revision radical by Rossitza Z. Lazova, M.D., Sarah N. Walsh, M.D., and Mark A. Hurt, M.D., 2007 [18]

New Heights: Ultraviolet radiation is not the chief cause of basal-cell carcinoma! by Roni Dodiuk-Gad, M.D., Shadi Damanpour, and A. Bernard Ackerman, M.D., 2008 [19]

New Heights: "Animal-type" melanoma and entities related to it. Part I: Evolution of a concept by François Milette, M.D., A. Bernard Ackerman, M.D., 2008 [20]

New Heights: "Animal-type" melanoma and entities related to it. Part II: Devolution of the concept: animal-type melanoma, epithelioid blue nevus, pigmented epithelioid melanocytoma? by François Milette, M.D. and A. Bernard Ackerman, M.D., 2008 [21]

Editorial: Toward ending the era of errors by Philip E. LeBoit, M.D., 2008 [22]

Philosophy: A breach of the standard of care by a histopathologic diagnosis unsupported by A. Bernard Ackerman, M.D., 2008 [23]

This, dear reader, is but a small sample of the content found in *Dermatopathology: Practical & Conceptual*, the kind of content that is difficult to find elsewhere; yet, these types of articles are a constant finding in the Journal.

Baruch Spinoza, the philosopher, noted correctly that "all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare." Such excellence and rarity imply high value. That, in essence, is my opinion of this Journal and of Dr. Böer's tenure thus far as its Editor-in-Chief. It is a difficult task, requiring thousands of hours each year for Dr. Böer to maintain the high standards initiated by Dr. Ackerman. She has done it well, and the Journal continues to serve as an intellectual oasis, unlike all other medical journals in print, online, or both.

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