Progressing From Print to Paperless Online Publishing

In transitioning from 2020, the year the COVID-19 pandemic began, to 2021, Mayo Clinic Proceedings wishes all its authors, reviewers, and readers, above all, their health and safety. Mayo Clinic Proceedings thanks them all for their outstanding contributions that make the journal such a continued success. Such contributions are all the more significant and laudable as they are made in the era of COVID-19, one that appeared so precipitously and upended virtually all aspects of our professional and personal lives. Cases of COVID-19 in the United States and other countries are again surging—as of mid-November 2020, the time of this writing—and considerable uncertainty surrounds when an effective and safe vaccine would be widely available. The global, national, societal, economic, professional, and personal stress from COVID-19 continues unabated.

COVID-19, however, has taught us how to adapt and to be resilient and to carry on in our professional and personal lives in the midst and angst of the pandemic. Indeed, overarching all this, and in ways that may not have otherwise occurred, the challenge of COVID-19 enabled a sense of unity and shared purpose; teamwork and collaboration across sectors and disciplines; collaboration among governmental agencies, pharmaceutical and other industries, and academic medical centers; the implementation of and reimbursement for telemedicine in health care; the acute recognition of structural weaknesses, inadequacies, and disparities in so many aspects of health care and its systems, and out of such recognition a resolve for needed change; a rediscovery of the fundamental mission of primary care and a reanalysis of ways how it should be optimally restructured; and an emphasis and drive towards creativity and innovation in all aspects of health care and its delivery, embracing, for example, the current capability and inherent potential of digital health initiatives and artificial intelligence.

COVID-19 has significantly influenced biomedical publishing. The number of submissions to journals, especially general medical journals such as Mayo Clinic Proceedings, on COVID-19-related topics has markedly increased. While offering the possibility of significantly advancing our understanding of the disease, such COVID-19-related content requires rigorous and expeditious evaluation. This objective may be challenging because the available reviewer pool of experts in COVID-19-related fields may not have increased commensurate with the number of COVID-19 submissions. Mayo Clinic Proceedings is especially appreciative of many experts who not only generously serve as reviewers for the abundant COVID-19-related submissions, but also accommodate our requests for expedited reviews. To facilitate timely and free accessibility of accepted COVID-19-related content, Mayo Clinic Proceedings publishes such content immediately online, without copy editing or type setting, on its website at its Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resource Center. Additionally, in September 2020, Mayo Clinic Proceedings published a supplemental issue, online only, that comprised 22 articles written by experts at Mayo Clinic and which discussed institutional strategies to the COVID-19 crisis.

Adaptation, resourcefulness, rapidity and cohesiveness in response, and harnessing technology and innovation—among the salient lessons of COVID-19—are some of the key underpinnings of how medical journals disseminate knowledge now and into the future. This is especially so as regards online journal publication. Online publication possesses in ways entirely unmatched by print publication a rapidity of content appearance; a
capacity to swiftly respond to timely and important issues and to improvise with the optimal matching of relevant content; the ability to provide its readers immediacy in electronic linkage to relevant literature and the opportunity for their own analysis of published data and their use of a virtual microscopy to explore anatomic/histologic images. Online publication is eminently positioned to broadly capitalize on the expanding potential of immersive technologies (virtual reality, augmented reality, and mixed reality). And, unlike print publication, online publication is not subject either to the high costs of printing and mailing, the need for repetitive recycling or housing and storage of print copies, or to significant concerns related to climate change and other adverse environmental effects.

After discussions with, endorsement by, and complete support of institutional leadership and its publisher Elsevier, Mayo Clinic Proceedings will be published as an online only journal from January 2021 onwards. We encourage readers to keep apprised of the latest content and developments by signing up for alerts at mayoclinicproceedings.org/register. This month thus marks a signal step in the continued progress and evolution of Mayo Clinic Proceedings, a journal within 5 years of a centenary of continuous publication. We are excited about serving as best as we can all our readers, authors, and reviewers and providing an online journal that draws upon the finest in the current capability and inestimable potential of the digital age.

We wish everyone health and safety in these exceptionally challenging and uncertain times.

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REFERENCES