The Journal of **THORACIC AND CARDIOVASCULAR SURGERY**

EDITORIALS

PUBLICATIONS OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THORACIC SURGERY, OR "HOW TO BE ALL THINGS TO . . ."

Andrew S. Wechsler, MD

From time to time, we receive letters or E-mails in the editorial office with helpful observations about the *Journal*. Sometimes the *Journal* is alleged to be "too esoteric, inadequately technical, light on review articles, or lacking in controversy." On any given day, perhaps any one of these comments is accurate. However, can the *Journal* really do a good job by trying to encompass all of these approaches?

The *Journal* is an independent publication that is overseen by the council and publication committee of The American Association for Thoracic Surgery (AATS). These bodies give the Editor and the Associate Editors broad discretion regarding the style and content of the *Journal*. As Editor, I wield at every opportunity the particular force that renders the *Journal* so valuable in our specialty and that accounts for its high impact rating and position in the *Science Citation Index*, that is, the qualitative, rigorous peer review process that reflects our concern for accuracy,

validity, and relevance. If it appears in the *Journal*, you can "take it to the bank." However, just because a manuscript survives the rigorous review process does not mean that its conclusions or experimental design is without controversy. Frequent editorials highlight the limitations of important studies, place discovery into perspective, and offer alternative interpretations of well-designed, well-implemented studies.

From the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery, MCP Hahnemann University, Philadelphia, Pa.

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The AATS shows its deep commitment to continuing education by offering a variety of products. Any one publication (including the *Journal*) is, by itself, incomplete. Several publications, as a package, each with a committed editor and staff, provide the contemporary thoracic surgeon with a wealth of technical information, reviews, and editorial commentary. In addition to the *Journal*, the AATS identifies the following as its official publications:

Operative Techniques in Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery

Seminars in Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery

The Pediatric Cardiac Surgery Annual

CT Digest

Of the AATS publications, the *Journal* is available both in print and online. *Operative Techniques*, *Seminars*, and *The Pediatric Cardiac Surgery Annual* are printed publications. *CT Digest* (www.CTDigest.com) is an electronic product that provides commentary by acknowledged experts on the most relevant articles in the publications from our specialty, as well as those from critically important related specialties such as cardiology, pulmonary medicine, anesthesiology, basic research, and cardiothoracic epidemiology.

CT Digest is the quickest way to obtain perspective on the most current articles of relevance to our daily practice and knowledge base. *Operative Techniques in*

Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery provides detailed, well-illustrated technical approaches to common problems, frequently with contributions by several authors describing different surgical solutions for the same problem. *Seminars in Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* focuses on one important general thoracic topic and one cardiovascular topic each issue with multiple expert review articles. *The Pediatric Cardiac Surgery Annual* is a collection of important original articles concerning surgery of congenital heart disease, edited and refereed by authorities in the field.

For the future, we hope to expand electronic coverage, with its associated hyperlinking possibilities, to the remaining two publications. Readers will then be able to quickly collect information from technical articles, contemporary basic and clinical scientific papers, topical reviews, and electronic commentary on the topic of their choice.

On its own, the *Journal* cannot be all things to all people, but the *Journal* together with the focused publications can. Used in tandem, they become a powerful educational package. The AATS remains committed, through its publications, to providing a body of knowledge that covers all aspects of our specialty.

Address for reprints: Andrew S. Wechsler, MD, Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery, MCP Hahnemann University, 230 N Broad St, Mail Stop 111, Philadelphia, PA 19102-1192.