

A time of change

This New Year heralded the beginning of a new decade and, for me, a new role as Editor in Chief for *Nutrition & Dietetics*. Thank you to the outgoing Editor in Chief, Professor Linda Tapsell, for her longstanding commitment to the journal and support in our recent transition. Thanks also to our Editorial Board and peer reviewers for their dedication in applying the highest editorial standards to all manuscripts submitted for publication.

Change is happening faster than ever before. Within this era of accelerating change one of our greatest challenges lies in delivering excellence. But what does this mean for scientific publishing? And, importantly, what does it mean for the future of *Nutrition & Dietetics*?

In the 580 years since the emergence of the printing press, mass printing and more recently digital technology have led to volumes of information, fast communication speed and 24/7 access. Although there have been numerous innovations that streamline processes in reporting and communication, scientific publishing has largely stalled in delivering a computerised output of a published work ... the pdf. This format is easy to read, but has been described as “antithetical to the spirit of the Web, being static rather than interactive”(p. 87).¹ This leaves us in a paradoxical situation where scientific information is sometimes so abundant that it is difficult to find and, despite its novelty and/or significance, is sometimes uninspiring.

Simultaneously, metrics for translation and impact have become increasingly important compared with the traditional metrics of journal impact factor and citations. Conferences remain an important medium for research dissemination, but authors increasingly promote their outputs to assist readers to discover and connect with their research. This impact may be increased through the use of owned media (eg, websites, blogs, and social media), earned media (where others discuss your research on websites, television, etc.), and paid media (advertising and promotion).²

There are expectations that scientific journals and publishers should do more to improve the author/reader interface. Journals must deliver content that is discoverable, and, in a medium that best suits both authors and readers. Keeping pace with digital innovation is not easy. Described as “winning the battle for relevance,” businesses (and therefore scientific journals) need to re-

calibrate, refocus, re-refresh, re-engineer, re-frame and re-position³ to endure. In practice, this means reconsidering the pdf and reimagining the appearance of a truly contemporary journal. *The New England Journal of Medicine* has embraced such opportunities through the inclusion of interactive cases and images, perspectives and audio summaries within their website to complement their traditional journal format. The journal website of our US colleagues, the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, hosts videos and podcasts by authors, and a research series facilitated by their editorial team.

Can *Nutrition & Dietetics* evolve to deliver research that is modern in its interface while informing dietetic practice? For example, into the future, should a 3 minute thesis style presentation by authors be included to complement their pdf? Would a monthly podcast, downloadable through a digital store support translating expensive research into practice? Even more ambitiously, can research in the spoken form become publishable in scientific journals, including in *Nutrition & Dietetics*? How would peer review be conducted and which reporting frameworks would apply? These are questions in which we are engaged, and seek solutions in order to refocus—sooner rather than later.

Paralleling this era of publishing change are ongoing pressures in the work environment that further compound difficulty in accessing and engaging with scientific evidence. For some practitioners research is not a priority.⁴ While dietitians set themselves apart from other nutritional professionals through their ability to deliver evidence based practice, practitioners report that they do not have time for evidence based practice activities.⁵ Evidence syntheses, often in the form of systematic reviews, present a potential solution as an efficient means to understand a subject. Although coming under some critique recently due to selection bias and the inclusion of poorly conducted trials,⁶ systematic reviews have been described as an elusive search for truth, aiming to address the needs both of decision makers and evidence users.⁷

Published in this issue, we learn that dietitians are confident in their use of systematic reviews, while reporting less confidence in their conduct.⁸ This confidence is reassuring since this issue of *Nutrition & Dietetics* comprises a series of recently accepted systematic reviews, including those submitted through our

invitation to authors who presented their research at the 2019 Dietitians Association of Australia conference. In recent years, the presentation of systematic reviews in Australia has increased⁹ potentially associated with increasing academic capacity.^{10,11} However their publication in *Nutrition & Dietetics* was limited to just four systematic reviews in 2018 to 2019.¹²⁻¹⁵ Thank you to the authors of conference abstracts who responded to our invitation to submit their systematic review through expedited peer-review.

This issue contains seven systematic reviews across diverse areas of practice. Yii et al¹⁶ explore population based interventions that address food insecurity in Australia, highlighting that there is a lack of a coordinated and coherent national response to address the many determinants of food insecurity. Rounsefell et al¹⁷ have critiqued the impact of social media engagement/exposure to image-related content on body image and food choices in the population of healthy young adults. Complementing this review, Panão & Carraça¹⁸ have synthesised evidence for exercise motivations on body image and eating habits/behaviour.

In the clinical setting, the review of Fleurke et al¹⁹ examines the role of the dietitian in the management of malnutrition in older adults. McLean et al²⁰ have synthesised the evidence for nutritional interventions for people admitted to hospital for alcohol withdrawal. The identification and synthesis of the effects of nutritional interventions on markers of sarcopenia in hospitalised patients aged 65 years and above are the focus of the review of Rus et al,²¹ while MacKenzie-Shalders et al²² highlights outcomes that have arisen from implementation of electronic bedside meal ordering systems into hospital foodservice.

Beyond systematic reviews, there are several key reports of professional issues for Australian dietitians published in this issue. These include research undertaken by Broome and Swanepoel¹⁰ who have benchmarked the research track records of dietetic academics in Australia, and the Hidden Jedi: a critical qualitative exploration of the Dietitians Association of Australia Fellow credential and advanced expertise.²³

We also learn from the geographical system mapping undertaken by a research team at the University of Sydney²⁴ that there are inequities in the access to dietitians for people with type 2 diabetes in rural, remote and disadvantaged areas. Challenges await us as a profession, and nation, in addressing such health inequalities.

Several other papers present research across diverse areas of practice. In a large cross-sectional study reported by Lavelle et al²⁵ we learn that diet quality is more strongly related to food skills rather than cooking skills

confidence. Original research investigating different aspects of renal function²⁶ and management²⁷ are included, as is the SPICE trial protocol.²⁸

Although we live in a time of rapid change, a strong evidence base is critical to support our profession. As you read this issue, reflect how you would like to receive journal content into the future ... how can this content be delivered to maximise its translation into practice? What would make research more engaging and easier to access? Opportunities for innovation await.

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