

Easing NEJM into its third century

A lot has changed since 1812, when surgeries were performed without anesthesia and the *New England Journal of Medicine* was printed on letterpress and distributed by horseback. But publisher and managing director Tom Easley says the founding principle of creating an interface between advances in medicine and practicing physicians abides.

“Everyone is keenly aware of the journal’s unsurpassed editorial integrity and the advances in science and medicine that have come from papers we’ve published,” he says. “We’ve tried to be just as innovative in interacting with physicians as customers and advertisers as customers.”

Connection is the theme of this year’s 200th anniversary. A special anniversary website (<http://nejm200.nejm.org>) includes an interactive medical discoveries timeline, special editorial content covering progress in various medical fields, a “Classic Clinical Images” gallery, more than 700 user-generated anniversary wishes and 26 video messages. In its first two months, the site garnered 113,000 visits (social media referred 18% of total visits).

“The most important thing now is leading this transition from a print product to a portfolio of content and services,” Easley says. Offerings include apps for the iPhone and iPad, a mobile newsletter, and a clinical practice center on NEJM.org. Video demonstrating common procedures is being developed for the clinical medical series, and the interactive medical cases series—which Easley says extends the average visit on NEJM.org to nearly 25 minutes—is expanding.

The journal has flourished on social media channels. Facebook “likes” have nearly doubled since late 2010 to more than 285,000. Twitter followers top 57,000 (up from 13,000 in late 2010).

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Tom Easley

Publisher, managing director, New England Journal of Medicine

1995-1999

Editorial director, Mosby Consumer Health

1992-1995

Sales director, Time Inc. Health (Health and Hippocrates)

tomers—it all comes back to that,” he adds. “We’ve infused the organization with talent in areas around new technology and new content forms.”

The journal has long been on the cutting edge of both medicine and publishing. It was among the first publications with full text on the internet in 1984 (its website was up in 1996), which Easley says provided an advantage in terms of both brand perception and innovation. The journal was also among the first to do strong demographic splits. Easley adds that publishing 52 times a year was advantageous in allowing bundling and discount programs for advertisers.

During WWII, copies of the journal were sent to active duty medical personnel, which Easley notes was both a service to the country and good business. “That sort of service and connection to the customer has really stood us well over time,” he says.

Easley began his career as a journalist. He gathered broad experience, including working for *NEJM* in 1983 as supervisor of development projects. A move into sales gave him insight into the business and marketing challenges of many different clients.

Though he enjoys his work, what Easley loves most is parenting his 11-year-old son. He’s also active in his church. He and his family volunteer when the church hosts homeless families through its affiliation with the Metrowest Interfaith Hospitality Network of Massachusetts.

A volunteer program is part of *NEJM*’s 200th celebration—with the goal of topping 2,400 employee hours this year.

As for the future of journal publishing, Easley believes flexibility, innovation and commitment to high standards will be keys to success.

“Successful journal publishers will have to think about how they diversify platforms and use relationships—that includes how they create and distribute content, how they market content using social tools and how they allow customers to have more control over their relationship with the content they use.”

—Tanya Lewis



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