



## Reflections from a Pandemic Era Editor

Sandra Steingard<sup>1</sup>

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When I began my tenure as Editor-in-Chief of the *Community Mental Health Journal* in January 2020, I was contemplating the direction in which I hoped to lead the journal. This led to inviting new members to our board and updating our Aims and Scope. I was not thinking about a pandemic. But COVID-19 arrived and, while journal editing lends itself to remote work, our submissions since 2019 have almost doubled and we are on pace in 2022 to surpass significantly the number of submissions from 2021. At the same time, our reviewers have struggled with the impact of COVID-19 on their lives: work is busier, child care is more complex, and, sadly but not unexpectedly, many of our reviewers and their families have been ill. While we hope that some of the increase in submission numbers is related to heightened interest in the journal, we recognize that much of the surge has been in the form of COVID-related manuscripts. Prior to the pandemic we had hoped to respond to authors in a timely way and, despite the pressures wrought by COVID-19, our average response time has dropped considerably since 2019.

“Fresh Focus” was introduced as a way to expand the types of articles we could publish as well as broaden the array of perspectives represented in the journal. We were pleased that our first Fresh Focus piece highlighted an initiative that supported health care workers who were overwhelmed in the first days and weeks following the appearance of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China (Cheng et al., 2020). We have continued to publish papers related to COVID-19. However, in order to address the challenge of finding reviewers while reducing the turn-around time for articles, we have had to make tough decisions about which manuscripts are sent for review. Major editorial decisions are made at the point of submission. Although the name of our journal suggests a broad purview, we continue to prioritize papers that

center on the “needs of people experiencing serious forms of psychological distress, as well as the structures established to address those needs” as outlined in our Aims and Scope. We look forward to our special issue focused on the effects of COVID-19 on the lives of people with serious mental illnesses or autism spectrum disorders.

We have moved ahead with other important initiatives. We changed the structure of the leadership of the journal and now have four Lead Editors whose primary function is to act as advisors to the Editor-in-Chief. A major focus of CMHJ has been the intersection of community mental health and social justice. Our Lead Editors are experts in that arena. We are interested in including articles written by those who have been marginalized in the field. We have received many submissions—both research and Fresh Focus articles—that provide publication avenues for such individuals and groups. We have just launched a new series written by activists working in low- and middle-income countries; the first papers appeared in our July 2022 issue (Florence et al., 2022, Kitafuna, 2022a, 2022b). We look forward to developing this series in the years ahead.

We welcome your interest in our work and invite you to communicate your questions and concerns. Please follow us on Twitter @communityment2.

## References

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✉ Sandra Steingard  
sandysteingard@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine,  
Burlington, VT 05405, USA

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