

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

B of T Report 8-I-19

Subject: Implementing AMA Climate Change Principles Through JAMA Paper Consumption Reduction and Green Healthcare Leadership (Resolution 615-A-19)

Presented by: Jesse M. Ehrenfeld, MD, MPH, Chair

Referred to: Reference Committee F
(Ann R. Stroink, MD, Chair)

At the 2019 Annual Meeting, the House of Delegates referred Resolution 615, “Implementing AMA Climate Change Principles Through *JAMA* Paper Consumption Reduction and Green Healthcare Leadership,” to the Board of Trustees. Resolution 615, introduced by the Medical Student Section, asked:

That our American Medical Association (AMA) change existing automatic paper *JAMA* subscriptions to opt-in paper subscriptions by the year 2020, while preserving the option to receive paper *JAMA*, in order to support broader climate change efforts.

BACKGROUND

The JAMA Network contains a collection of 13 peer-reviewed, clinical research journals published by the American Medical Association, including *JAMA*, 11 specialty titles, and *JAMA Network Open*. The journals publish content online on a weekly basis, as well as in print journals on a periodic schedule (48 times per year for *JAMA*, once a month for specialty titles), except for *JAMA Network Open*, which is online only. The journals are highly prestigious with Impact Factors in the top 10 in their fields, many in the top 3, and acceptance rates for most at 10% or less. The reach of these journals is global, particularly *JAMA*, with countries outside the US accounting for approximately half of the total views. As a benefit of membership, all AMA members receive online access to the entire collection of journals in the JAMA Network. In addition, approximately 55% of members receive a print copy of *JAMA*. The overall business model for the JAMA Network consists of digital site licenses to institutions for access to the content, advertising (primarily print), and licensing/reuse of previously published content. This multifactor business model provides revenue to support the editorial and publishing operations of the JAMA Network, as well as providing funding to support overall AMA initiatives.

DISCUSSION

Over the past 15 years, the business model for Publishing has shifted from one that was previously driven by print advertising to one that is currently driven by institutional site licensing. As a result, the overall revenue mix has shifted from being 90% print to only 40% print in 2018. However, print advertising remains a key leg to the overall business model for Publishing, providing revenue to sustain the publishing and editorial functions of the journals. In addition, this revenue stream has provided funding for the development of new modes of content distribution including a mobile app, podcasts, and video content. Although digital advertising has grown along with online views, it remains a fraction (1/7th) of the existing print revenue as growth in the broader digital ad market is

1 focused on search advertising, which is dominated by Google and Facebook, while traditional
2 banner ads that run on the JAMA Network have stagnated and/or declined. *JAMA*'s print
3 circulation of 295,000 in 2018 is a strategic benefit both to the JAMA Network as a value
4 proposition for authors regarding the network's ability to communicate critical research as broadly
5 as possible, and for the AMA as a consistently top-cited benefit of membership. Due to US Postal
6 Service regulations, half of the individuals receiving print must be "requesters" in order to mail at
7 periodical rates. Members account for 80% of this requester pool and are a key component to
8 maintaining the overall ratio. A loss of members in print circulation would have a multiplier effect,
9 leading to a 2-for-1 reduction in overall circulation to meet USPS regulations. This would reduce
10 the overall reach of the journals, as well as inhibit the print advertising model, which currently
11 provides a surplus of funds for the JAMA Network and the AMA.

12 13 CONCLUSION

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15 Over the last 5 years, the Publishing group has reduced overall print copies by 33%, saving ~1,500
16 tons of paper on an annual basis, in efforts to reduce costs and paper waste. The print circulation
17 level is evaluated on an ongoing basis and are exploring opportunities to move to digital printing, a
18 cost-effective option to print at significantly lower quantities. The JAMA Network is now a digital-
19 first portfolio, with most research content published online ahead of print. Along these lines and in
20 deploying environmentally sustainable practices, the recently launched journal, *JAMA Network*
21 *Open*, is an online-only title with zero print circulation. However, the breadth of circulation for
22 *JAMA* remains a key asset for soliciting the best papers from the author community and supporting
23 the overall business model to fund new digital-focused methods of distributing content.

24 25 RECOMMENDATION

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27 *JAMA*'s print circulation is a key asset, best supported by maintaining the current opt-out policy for
28 AMA Members. However, based on the analysis that led to this report, the JAMA Network has
29 accelerated the shift to digital printing for journals in the portfolio and will be moving forward with
30 a pilot program to move *JAMA Surgery* to digital printing in 2020, which will reduce the overall
31 circulation for that title by over 90%. If successful, this model will be extended as appropriate to
32 other journals in the network to drive an overall reduction in print copies, consistent with reducing
33 the AMA's carbon footprint.

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35 The Board of Trustees recommends that the following be adopted in lieu of Resolution 615-A-19,
36 and the remainder of this report be filed:

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38 That our American Medical Association continue to explore environmentally sustainable
39 practices for *JAMA* distribution.

Fiscal Note: None