2017 in-training initiative of the *Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics*: the JARG Young Investigator Forum

Kara N. Goldman¹ · Pasquale Patrizio² · David Albertini³

Received: 1 December 2016 / Accepted: 8 December 2016 / Published online: 21 December 2016
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Abstract The *Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics* introduces the JARG Young Investigator Forum, an in-training initiative aimed to expand opportunities for young investigators. The JARG Young Investigator Forum has three primary goals: first, to increase opportunities for trainees and young investigators to contribute as researchers and writers. Trainees will be invited to publish mini-reviews based on their area of research interest/expertise and will have the opportunity to indicate “in-training” when submitting manuscripts as first author. Educational research pertaining to reproductive medicine training will be added to the purview of the journal. Second, the Young Investigator Forum will increase opportunities for trainees to serve as journal reviewers and will provide mentorship throughout the peer review process. Third, trainees will have the unique opportunity to gain editorial experience by serving as a “guest editor” of the Young Investigator Forum, overseeing all editorial aspects of their assigned particular issue. Through authorship, peer review, and editorial experience, we seek to

nurture the academic skills that are critical to a well-rounded career. The JARG Young Investigator Forum aims to foster career development for a generation of trainees who represent the future of reproductive medicine, and here, we outline the primary goals and objectives of the initiative.

Keywords Young Investigator Forum · In-training · Education · Peer review · Guest editor

Capsule The *Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics* recognizes our commitment to foster career development for basic and clinical scientists whose future contributions will define the global landscape of reproductive medicine. Here we present the JARG Young Investigator Forum, an in-training initiative seeking to expand opportunities for trainees and young investigators through authorship, peer review, and editorial experience.

✉ Kara N. Goldman
kara.goldman@nyumc.org

Professional identity is formed in training. Reproductive medicine specialists spend an average of 7 years of post-graduate training to gain the surgical and clinical skills that will be the foundation of their clinical careers. Less easily taught, but just as crucial for a successful career in reproductive medicine, are the intangible skills of effective communication through scientific writing and critical review of scientific literature necessary for the growth of the field and for the proper interpretation of the literature. Training for authorship, peer review, and editorial experience is however lacking [1], and we hope that by launching this “in-training initiative,” JARG can ultimately become the ideal educational platform for trainees in all aspects of reproductive medicine. In launching this initiative, which is a byproduct of discussions at the annual Board of Editors meeting, the *Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics* aims to expand opportunities for trainees to contribute to JARG in three ways:

To offer opportunities to young investigators to contribute as researchers and writers

Fellowship offers a unique opportunity for individuals to devote 18 months of training to a specific area of research. The work implicitly requires that the fellow gain expertise in their particular area, with extensive opportunities to read and interpret the

¹ New York University Langone Medical Center, NYU Fertility Center, 660 First Avenue, 5th floor, New York, NY 10016, USA

² Yale Fertility Center, 150 Sargent Drive, Suite 2nd floor, New Haven, CT 06511, USA

³ Center for Human Reproduction, 21 East 69th Street, New York, NY 10021, USA

literature in order to plan and execute their study. In the process, most trainees compile an extensive literature review that would be of great interest to the JARG readership but may be considered too esoteric for publication in a journal with a wider readership. This expertise should be shared, and in this way we present an initiative to publish mini-reviews from fellows regarding their area of expertise.

Publication in respected journals has become increasingly competitive. Trainees who are still developing their publication and writing skills are competing for publication with experts nationally and internationally. Most in academic medicine have no formal training in scientific writing for publication, only developing their skills through trial and error [2]. We argue that the work of trainees should be acknowledged, with trainees given opportunities to develop these skills and have their voices heard through publication. We present an initiative to give trainees an opportunity to indicate “in-training” when submitting a manuscript as first-author to the *Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics*, ensuring that trainees’ work will be highlighted in the “in-training” section of the journal.

Improving education within reproductive medicine is of great interest to both trainees and educators. Research related to the education of reproductive medicine specialists may not fit into the purview of the leading reproductive medicine journals and may be too narrowly focused for journals geared to a broader audience. Also critical is ensuring that resident trainees have ample exposure to reproductive endocrinology, as general obstetrician-gynecologists (OB/GYN) provide “first-line” treatment to our patients before presenting for specialized care. Unfortunately, many graduating OB/GYN residents describe their knowledge of reproductive endocrinology and infertility as poor, further emphasizing the need to enhance the training experience in reproductive endocrinology and infertility for all trainees [3]. We therefore propose an initiative to include educational research as a component of the “in-training” portion of the journal.

To offer opportunities to trainees to contribute as journal reviewers

As with all aspects of medical training, the process of critically reviewing a manuscript requires practice. Opportunities for this practice are lacking, and many journal reviewers learn through trial and error. We believe that the process of learning how to critically review a manuscript will not only make a trainee a better writer for their own future submissions, but will also enhance the ability to critically interpret the literature for future clinical practice. Intriguingly, in a study assessing peer review skills among 306 experienced reviewers, the only predictors of producing quality reviews were being within 10 years of training and working at an academic institution [4]. By definition, reproductive medicine fellows meet these criteria. Critically reviewing

manuscripts provides a rich educational opportunity for fellows, and consistently including fellows in the pool of reviewers will likely further enrich the quality of reviews.

The decision regarding whether to recommend acceptance, rejection, or re-review of a manuscript is important, and traditional notions of what makes a manuscript worthy of publication are being challenged. The American Statistical Association (ASA) recently released a statement cautioning the overemphasis of the p value when interpreting study findings, and leaders in reproductive medicine responded by encouraging readers and reviewers to consider the results and significance of findings only in the context of study design, methods, possible bias, and previous studies [5]. Journal reviewers have a responsibility to maintain the highest of standards when reviewing manuscripts while understanding that negative results may be just as important as positive findings. We are tasked to ensure that we are providing fair and informed reviews of submitted manuscripts and therefore publishing quality science that will propel our field forward. As many fellows may not yet have ample experience as reviewers, and nuanced differences between submissions may best be appreciated alongside a more experienced reviewer, we thus propose an initiative to increase fellow contributions as reviewers of JARG manuscripts and to provide mentorship for junior reviewers of JARG submissions.

Consistent with our call for increased formal training in the peer review process, JARG leadership will lead a workshop on publication peer review at the Society for Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility (SREI) Fellowship Symposium in Park City, UT, in 2017. Fellows will have the opportunity to see examples of thoughtful and well-developed manuscript reviews and will learn from the editor’s perspective what is valued in both manuscripts and reviews.

To provide opportunities to trainees to gain editorial experience as a guest editor

Experience with peer review in scientific publications is largely self-taught, as is journal editorial experience. In a JAMA survey of the Editors-in-Chief of 262 peer-reviewed clinical journals, 44% of respondents had no formal training in editing skills, despite the majority expressing that training would be valuable [6]. An opportunity for a trainee to be “guest editor” of the *Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics* would be mutually advantageous. Fellows have their “fingers on the pulse” and are best positioned to understand what trainees want to read and learn, and therefore, their contribution as guest editor will serve to improve the journal’s approachability to a younger readership. At the same time, we seek to provide opportunities to trainees to gain experience in critical scientific review and journal organization and editing; rare experiences that will undoubtedly enrich their ability to contribute to the field throughout their career. We thus propose an initiative to offer trainees the opportunity to be

guest editors of the “in-training” section of the JARG by submitting proposals and overseeing all aspects of that portion of the publication. Consistent with past efforts at the JARG, identification of specialty topics will be a result of collaborative interactions between contributing fellows and members of the editorial board who have taken a special interest in developing topical issues based on focus meetings or recognized educational needs within the purview of the JARG.

JARG seeks to expand its presence among trainees, providing a resource to promote publication of research by, for, and about residents, fellows, and other young investigators. The skills of authorship, peer review, and journal editorial experience, while not consistently or commonly taught, are critical to a well-rounded career. At JARG, we continue to recognize our commitment to foster career development for basic and clinical scientists whose future contributions will define the global landscape of reproductive medicine. We look forward to your participation in this exciting endeavor and welcome your feedback and suggestions while we launch this 2017 in-training initiative, the JARG Young Investigator Forum.

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