

# Celebrate the 115th Anniversary of the *Southern Medical Journal* during 2023

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To help celebrate the 115th anniversary of this publication, I spent some time researching the history of the *Southern Medical Journal* (*SMJ*). I found that no comprehensive and definitive history exists, but I did find some reliable information regarding the history of the *SMJ* from the early 20th century to the present.

The beginnings of the *SMJ* are not precisely clear. One source indicates the *Southern Medical Journal* descended from the *Southern Medical and Surgical Journal*.<sup>1</sup> The *Southern Medical and Surgical Journal* was founded in 1836 by Dr Milton Antony (1789–1839) in Augusta, Georgia at the newly established Medical College of Georgia. Dr Antony became the first editor-in-chief and served as such for several years before he died in 1839. He also played an important role in the early development of medicine in the state of Georgia. He participated in the creation of the Georgia State Board of Medical Examiners and the founding of the Medical College of Georgia in 1828.<sup>2–5</sup> (The *Southern Journal of Medicine and Surgery* was published by the Medical College of Georgia from its founding in 1836 to 1867, based on a complete collection from these years that is archived and viewable on the Internet.<sup>6</sup>)

Extensive efforts to trace the history of the *Southern Journal of Medicine and Surgery* forward from its founding to current times does not reveal any mentions of a “Southern Medical Journal” or any other antecedent journal that obviously became the *SMJ*. The Tristate Medical Association of the Carolinas and Virginia and the Medical Society of North Carolina began publishing a journal entitled *Charlotte Medical Journal* in the late 1800s. The title changed to *Charlotte Medical Journal: A Southern Journal of Medicine and Surgery* in 1893. This journal was published continuously until at least the 1950s, but apparently not for long thereafter.

The *SMJ* was founded and published in the early 1900s by Dr Seale Harris.<sup>7</sup> Dr. Harris was a prominent physician who entered private practice in Alabama around the beginning of the 20th century. He later joined the faculty of the University of Alabama Medical School in the early 1900s, when it was located in Mobile. He served with distinction in the US Army Medical Corps during World War I. He also was the editor of a journal

entitled *War Medicine*. He returned to private practice in Alabama after the war. Dr Harris authored many contributions to the medical literature during his lifetime. He also wrote about some notable nonmedical and political topics.

Dr Harris was the owner and editor of the *SMJ* for several years in the early 1900s.<sup>7</sup> (No information could be found to determine whether he founded the *SMJ* de novo or assumed ownership and/or responsibility for it from another party.) He subsequently became president of the Southern Medical Association. In 1908, the Southern Medical Association began publishing the *SMJ*. The Southern Medical Association has published the *Southern Medical Journal* ever since.<sup>8,9</sup> Dr Harris edited the *SMJ* for a few years after the Southern Medical Association assumed responsibility for its publication. Volume 4 (1911) indicated that Dr Harris was still the editor. It also indicated that the *Gulf States Journal of Medicine and Surgery* and the *Mobile Medical and Surgical Journal* had been incorporated into the *SMJ*.<sup>10</sup>

Dr Harris was particularly renowned for his research involving insulin, diabetes mellitus, and hyperinsulinemia.<sup>11</sup>

I have perused many articles published in the *SMJ* for most of the past 40 years or so. I first became aware of the *SMJ* in the late 1970s, when I was a medical student at Albany Medical College. At that time, medical students were required to go to the library and find two relevant articles to place on the charts of most of the patients they saw during their clinical rotations. I can still remember spending many hours in the library performing such required tasks. Literature searches at that time were mostly manual efforts for medical students. Once you found an article or textbook that touched on a relevant condition or issue regarding the patient you saw, you could look at the references in the book and try to find them in the library.

Most of the library floor space was used for large shelves of books, journals, and for many scores of photocopying machines so one could copy printed material to study at home. As a student, I remember keeping hundreds of dimes in a bag or two in the pocket of my white coat so I could use the copying machines to copy articles for my learning and to put on the patient chart as I was required to do.

I encountered the *SMJ* during many of my article-hunting missions. The bright red cover design easily differentiated the *SMJ* from most other journals at the time. The articles were informative even to a medical student like me. I also enjoyed skimming through other articles elsewhere in the volume that contained the articles I needed to copy. I scratched my head a bit when I learned there was a *Western Journal of Medicine* and other journals like the *SMJ* that had a geographic region in their title and did not have a particular specialty focus.

I had no inkling during my training and earlier career that I eventually would end up working as a journal reviewer and journal editor later in my career. One of the highlights of my career has been to support the *SMJ* and some other journals as a reviewer to support the production of medical literature, to mentor authors to improve their submitted manuscripts, to help other clinicians engage in journal-sponsored continuing medical education activities to educate themselves more effectively and efficiently, and to

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help medical scientists and other stakeholders benefit from the resources of the *SMJ*. I have two daughters who have chosen medicine as their career. I also try to push interesting bits of information their way, too.

During early 2023 (including this issue), the *SMJ* will publish a summary of the history of radiology in New Orleans. This history was compiled by Dr Edward I. Bluth, a prominent academic radiologist, who was able to record first-person accounts from many of the pioneering radiologists in New Orleans. I hope this information will allow many members of the Southern Medical Association and other individuals to reflect on the accomplishments and advances they and others have contributed to the practice and science of medicine during the last century or so in the southern region of the United States.

Happy Birthday to the *SMJ*!! Thanks to all of the people who have worked so hard to make the *SMJ* a successful medical journal for the past 115 years! I hope that I will be doing as well as the *SMJ* when I get to 115!!!

What an extraordinary privilege it is to serve as editor-in-chief for the *SMJ* and work with all of the talented and dedicated individuals who support the *SMJ* and the Southern Medical Association.

Thank you and best wishes for 2023.

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