

# The Birth of The *Israel Medical Association Journal*

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The twenty years of the *Israel Medical Association Journal* (IMAJ) overlap significantly with my 14 years as President of the Israeli Medical Association (IMA). Indeed, joining IMAJ to the family of IMA journals was one of the most important decisions I made as President. Looking back at the twenty years of IMAJ allows me to reminisce about the years of my candidacy and the change in the nature and status of the IMA over that time.

I was first elected President of the IMA in 1995. Prior to that, I served as Chairman of the IMA professional committee, the body responsible at the time for negotiating the salaries and working conditions of Israeli physicians. In order to promote unity among the various IMA organizations, such as the Organization of Clalit Health Services Physicians and the Organization of State Employed Physicians, I adopted a principle of total transparency with regard to the benefits offered to physicians employed by the different organizations. This decision and its subsequent implementation generated a major change in the atmosphere surrounding the IMA leadership, and increased trust, confidence and cooperation among the different parties. This in turn led the way for further change, and the beginning of a better, stronger and more influential IMA.

The IMA is a unique organization. By nature, it is a trade union, responsible for the salaries and working conditions of the physicians. Its status as a signatory to the collective bargaining agreements with the Finance Ministry and the major physicians' employers confers upon it a major responsibility. At the same time, the IMA, from its very inception in 1912, took upon itself to play a central role in and be an influence on the healthcare system in Israel. Even its name – the Israel Medical Association, rather than the Israeli Physicians' Association – alludes to its concern for the welfare of patients and the health system in general, rather than just the welfare of physicians. It was my underlying belief that the more the IMA is involved in influencing the healthcare system, the more our influence and role as physicians and our status in the country will grow and strengthen. With the invaluable partnership of Leah Wapner as CEO, this vision became a reality. This image of the IMA, as the

sole, comprehensive representative organization of the physicians in Israel, led to the decision to unite the IMA Scientific Council with other parts of the organization. The Scientific Council moved from its site in Tel Aviv to the central offices in Ramat Gan. This relocation was not only a change in its physical nature, but also a significant change in its function and relationship with the IMA, adding it to the umbrella of IMA units under the administrative responsibility of the IMA leadership, with Leah Wapner as CEO. The annexation of the Scientific Council to the IMA, retaining its autonomy while allowing it to interact directly with IMA scientific associations, legal counsel and other vital organs, served to strengthen the Council and improve both its outcomes and its services for the physicians. The IMA also encompasses over 150 professional medical specialty associations, societies, and workgroups. These bodies are the cornerstones of the scientific arm of the IMA and play an essential role in both developing standards for medicine and assisting the Scientific Council as the responsible organ of the many medical specialties defined by law. In view of their important role, we decided to “embrace” the leaderships of the associations by bringing them into the IMA. We offered every possible administrative assistance and opened the IMA facilities to assist them in their regular and daily functions. We started an annual meeting of the associations, which became a yearly tradition, and encouraged their influence in every possible regard.

By creating a new status for the specialty associations and with their increasing influence, we became an integral part of any healthcare discussion in the Knesset and the public arena. Soon, the IMA was invited to all the Knesset committee meetings that discussed healthcare subjects, always backed by highly professional position papers prepared by the relevant specialty association as well as by the policy department of the IMA.

Strengthening the IMA's position was in my view not merely a domestic imperative but an international one as well. The IMA has been a leading figure in the international arena over the past two decades. Our membership in international organizations has enabled us to both learn from and share our experiences with colleagues around the world, by serving as legal and ethical advisors, leading workgroups, and submitting various statements and declarations adopted by these organizations. In addition, our status allowed us to present the true side of Israel and Israeli medicine, and defend Israeli physicians against anti-Israel and antisemitic attacks and threats of boy-

cotts. IMA leaders have held leading positions in these organizations, with my election twice as Chair of Council and once as President of the World Medical Association (WMA), the institution last October elected my successor at the IMA, Professor Leonid Eidelman, as President of the WMA, and the election of Leah Wapner, IMA secretary general, as executive director of EFMA (European Forum of Medical Associations). In addition, the IMA successfully updated its status in the CPME (Standing Committee of European Doctors) from observer to associate membership, despite not being geographically part of the European continent, and several of our scientific associations have joined as members of the UEMS (European Union of Medical Specialists).

Finally, the concept of a broader role for the IMA was personified by the decision in 1999 to bring the *Israel Medical Association Journal* under our roof. In 1996, the *Israel Journal of Medical Sciences* stopped publication and I decided that the IMA should do its utmost to continue publication of the journal. Together with Leah Wapner, I met with Prof. Moshe Prywes, the journal's Editor-In-Chief for 32 years, who was enthusiastic about the idea. Born in Poland and a medical graduate of Warsaw University, Prof. Moshe Prywes immigrated to Israel in 1951. He served as Associate Dean of the Hebrew University-Hadassah Medical School. In 1973, Prof.

Prywes was appointed President of Ben-Gurion University and devoted himself to medical education. For his pioneering work in medical education, Prof. Prywes received the Israel Prize. After Prof. Prywes passed away in 1998, we purchased the copyright to the journal through a court decision from his family, promising his children that Prof. Prywes' name will appear on each issue as the previous Editor-in-Chief. And thus the *Israel Medical Association Journal* was born. It was only natural that the new Editor-in-Chief would be Prof. Yehuda Shoenfeld and the deputy editors, Prof. Joshua Shemer and Prof. Gad Keren, in addition to their being the team of editors of *Harefuah*, a monthly Hebrew journal also published by the IMA. In retrospect, the decision to choose Prof. Yehuda Shoenfeld as the Editor-In-Chief was an excellent one, in view of the continued success of the journal, indexed in all the major indexing bodies and reaching an impact factor of 1.036.

For 20 years, 12 issues every year, *IMAJ* has presented research and clinical publications of excellent quality, enhancing the reputation of our Israeli physicians. It is my privilege to thank you, Prof. Shoenfeld, together with Prof. Shemer and Prof. Keren, on my behalf and on behalf of the Israel medical community.

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**Capsule**

**ChAT-ty T cells fight viral infection**

The neurotransmitter acetylcholine (ACh) is involved in processes such as muscle contraction, neuron communication, and vasodilation. Along with neurons, a population of immunological T cells and B cells express the enzyme choline acetyltransferase (ChAT), which catalyzes the rate-limiting step of ACh production. However, the role of immune cell-derived ACh is unclear. **Cox** et al. report that the cytokine interleukin-21 (IL-21) induces ChAT expression in CD4+ and CD8+ T cells during lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus infection. T cell-

specific deletion of ChAT strongly impaired vasodilation and trafficking of antiviral T cells into infected tissues, which undermined the effective control of a chronic viral infection. Thus, IL-21 plays a critical role during chronic infection. Furthermore, the findings reveal a cholinergic mechanism that can regulate immune cell migration into tissues.

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Eitan Israeli

**Capsule**

**Doubling down on breast cancer**

Triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC) is a highly aggressive form of cancer that preferentially affects women of African ancestry. An incomplete understanding of the cellular signaling mechanisms that drive TNBC growth has slowed the development of effective therapies. A study of an extracellular matrix protein named Tinagl1 may offer new hope. **Shen** and co-workers found that therapeutic delivery of Tinagl1 suppresses tumor growth and metastasis in mouse

models of TNBC. Tinagl1 exerts its anti-cancer effect by simultaneously inhibiting two distinct signaling pathways: the epidermal growth factor receptor and the focal adhesion kinase pathways. TNBC patients whose tumors showed high expression levels of Tinagl1 had better clinical outcomes.

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