Exploring *The Journal of Rheumatology* with Drs. Arthur Bookman and Michel Zummer

Dr. Arthur Bookman (University of Toronto) was the CRA chief negotiator for the purchase of The Journal of Rheumatology and is the newly appointed Chair of the Board of The Journal of Rheumatology. Dr. Michel Zummer (Université de Montréal) and Dr. Gunnar Kraag (University of Ottawa) are the other CRA appointed members of the Board of the Journal of Rheumatology. The purchase of The Journal by the CRA has many implications on the future directions of the CRA and The Journal which are explored in this interview.

1. *The Journal of Rheumatology* has now been formally acquired by the CRA.
   **What is the relationship now of The Journal of Rheumatology to the CRA?**
   The CRA has bought 100% of the shares in *The Journal of Rheumatology*, and so we are now the proprietors of the journal but we have not in any way interrupted the operations of the journal. We have changed the structure of the Executive Board and Advisory Board a little bit, but other than that the journal is going to function as per usual. It’s an international journal and it will remain an international journal, and its hallmarks and identifications will remain unchanged.

   **Has it been afforded the status of a committee? Do the members of the CRA own the company?**
   No we’re not a committee, we are an independent company, at arms-length from the CRA. The CRA owns the company but it does not operate it in any way.

   **Are members of the CRA shareholder’s of *The Journal of Rheumatology***?
   The CRA as a whole is the shareholder.

2. *The Journal of Rheumatology* has a Board of Directors with five members. The both of you (Art and Michel), as well as Gunnar Kraag have been appointed.
   **Does the CRA control appointments to the board?**
   The CRA in our agreement, initially appoints three members to a five member board. The former shareholders appoint two members to the board. So the CRA has control of the board and the CRA will appoint the President and the Vice President among their three members.

   **Do the board members need to have approval from the CRA executive for major decisions?**
   No, it’s independent of the CRA, and at arms length of the CRA.

3. How does the Board of *The Journal of Rheumatology* formally interact with the Editorial Board of *The Journal of Rheumatology*?
   There is a new structural arrangement now that we’ve purchased *The Journal*. The Editor-in-Chief and the Editorial Board are afforded editorial independence. The Board will not control them. If there is a dispute between the Editor-in-Chief and the Board, we have structured an Advisory Committee (we are in the process of comprising this). This will be a combination of CRA members, and independent members as well. A member of this Advisory Committee will be appointed Chair, and that Chair will be engaged along with the President and Vice President of the board in the monthly meetings with the Editor-in-Chief and management staff so that they will have some involvement with the operations. The advisory committees are chosen with mutual agreement of the former shareholders and new owners of the journal.

   **Who determines the salary structure for the boards?**
   The journal is not at the point of allotting salaries, but we are hoping to reimburse travel expenses and other expenses incurred by board members when attending meetings, etc.

4. Are there any immediate plans to alter the content for format of *The Journal of Rheumatology*?
   There are no immediate plans. It’s the Editorial Board that makes any changes if there are some. It’s more about...
learning about the journal first. The Journal is not in distress in any way—it’s in good operation, so we want to understand the business a lot better before recommending anything. The CRA identifies closely with the journal and we cannot in any way take away from the fact that it’s an international journal, with international readership and international editors and publications, so we don’t want to make it a colloquial publication. That’s why we’re moving gingerly.

5. Will the CRA be identified in some way as the publisher of The Journal of Rheumatology in The Journal itself?
Probably. We have only had one Board meeting but we haven’t really put this subject on the table as of yet. We will have to try and think of what would be the best way to identify the relationship between the CRA and the journal first.

6. What are your feelings about inclusion of a subscription to The Journal of Rheumatology as part of the membership views of the CRA?
We would like the CRA to buy a subscription for every member of the CRA—the cost of that to be the cost of membership into the CRA. However, I don’t think that’s the way we’ll be moving initially. The CRA will be supplementing the cost instead. So the members of the CRA will get a subscription at a discounted price.

7. What do you see as the major challenges of The Journal of Rheumatology especially in these stormy financial times?
Financials. We won’t really know how we will settle out for about a year. The revenues are predicted to be fairly good next year. Our Canadian advertisers have been stable and our American advertisers have fallen a little bit, but not too terribly. Our supplements are better this year than last, so we’re hoping to have a better financial year next year.

Another challenge is how to handle the online content—how to be up-to-date, how to make it a value for the readership and the advertisers. The readers want internet but the advertisers want the hardcopies, so a lot of the throw-away journals exist virtually by handing out the journals, to ensure they have a hardcopy with a lot of eyes on it—trouble is, they say that’s their readership. But with academic journals (that are very expensive to publish), you can’t just hand out hardcopies to everyone and claim that as your readership. It’s quite the conundrum, and I think that every academic journal is trying to deal with this issue right now.

8. Do you have any final comments about The Journal of Rheumatology and the new role of the Canadian Rheumatology Association as owner and publisher.
It’s a challenging time for us to have taken on such a financial acquisition. We’re depending on the stability of the journal for the last 20 years and we see no reason why that stability should be lost. It’s been a stable financial endeavor for that time and we’re hoping that as long as we can weather the next couple of years, it will be an excellent asset for our professional association as we go forward. It will be another financial base for revenues for our organization after another eight to 10 years, and it will be a source of international exposure for our Canadian Rheumatologists. I think it will also be a challenge to the members of the CRA to meet. Now we have an international asset to showcase Canadian rheumatology research and the standards that we are developing could potentially have an international audience. This will only enhance exposure and reputation.

Lastly, I want to close by saying that the purchase of The Journal of Rheumatology was a decision that was very well thought out and discussed, and we are very confident that the right decision was made and that it will bring added value to the CRA.

Arthur A.M. Bookman MD, FRCPC
Associate Professor of Medicine
University of Toronto
Coordinator, Multidisciplinary Sjogrens Clinic, UHN
Toronto, Ontario

Michel Zummer MD, FRCPC
Assistant Professor,
Université de Montréal
Chief, Division of Rheumatology,
Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont
Montreal, Quebec