Passing the Baton

Pediatric Exercise Science was the brainchild of Rainer Martens of Human Kinetics Publishers back in 1987. Thomas Rowland agreed to undertake the challenge and in February of 1989, the first issue of Pediatric Exercise Science was launched. Over the next 23 years (Yes, 23 years!), along with a dedicated and supportive Editorial Board, Tom has “raised” the journal from conception, through the discovery years of childhood, the turbulent years of adolescence, to its present day adult form. In his very first Editor’s Note, Tom explained that the journal came about in response to the growing worldwide concern about fitness, physical activity and the effects of exercise in children. “Results of mass fitness testing have been interpreted as indicating that youngsters in many modern societies may be seriously out of shape. Is this really true? What are the implications for their future health? How do we reverse this trend?” (1) This was the beginning of more than 23 volumes of Pediatric Exercise Science, each accompanied by insightful, often delightful Editor’s Notes. In each issue, numerous studies were published attempting to address these and related concerns.

It is fair to say that we are still facing these concerns today. There is mounting evidence that today’s children are not as active or fit as children two and three decades ago. We have better and broader understanding of the many adverse implications of this low level of physical activity and fitness for children’s future health (e.g., early onset of obesity and many related “adult” diseases such as Type II diabetes, possible early cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and more). We know that exercise can delay and possibly prevent some of these diseases. We also know that exercise and physical activity during childhood can serve as a management or therapeutic tool in chronic diseases (e.g., type I diabetes). But the debate still rages on how to reverse the secular trend of diminished fitness and physical activity in our youth.

At the other end of the continuum, one of the questions asked in the first Editor’s Notes revolved around the effect of intense sports participation on the growing bodies and minds of children and adolescents, and whether we should set limits to their training (1). Ironically, with the decrease in overall physical activity among today’s youth, organized sports participation is on the rise, with increasing demands of elite-level competition. As these pages are heading to print, many are getting ready to take part (in person or in spirit), in the greatest show on earth, the Olympic Games. No doubt, we will witness superb sporting achievements—some by youths, most by adults. As a 12-year old, South African Karen Muir, was the youngest athlete in any sport to break a world record (1:08.7 min in the 110 yard backstroke swim, 1965). However, due to the boycott on South Africa, she never had the opportunity to take part in the Olympic Games. In today’s Olympic Games, various sports (although not swimming) have minimum age limits, with the aim
of protecting young athletes from the high demands of elite training and competition. Numerous studies have demonstrated children’s trainability, and some of the physiological, psychological and even cognitive effects of physical training in children. Nevertheless, we still have not established safe or optimal ages for eliciting various training adaptations. Thus, while we have certainly advanced our knowledge, 23 years later, Tom Rowland’s question regarding safe training remains largely answered.

Some of the most exciting and suspenseful Olympic events have always been the track relay races. With each passing of the baton, fans hold their breath, as this phase of the race often determines the final outcome. In the Beijing Olympic Games, both the U.S. men’s and women’s 4 x 100 relay teams failed to reach the finals because they dropped the baton during qualifications. At Pediatric Exercise Science, the suspense does not fall short of its Olympic counterpart. After 23 years of leadership, Tom Rowland has decided to pass on the baton. I am delighted and honored to be on the receiving end of this exchange. At the same time, I am fully cognizant of the great responsibility of securely holding onto the baton and covering a fair distance with it. However, I do not promise a 23-year tenure!

The late Oded Bar-Or was a talented track athlete in his youth. However, many of us know him as the “Father of Pediatric Exercise Physiology” (2). He made and often emphasized the point that children are not small adults. They are different anatomically, physiologically, psychologically and cognitively.

During my turn with the baton, so to speak, I will attempt to continue what Tom Rowland started. I would like the journal to provide a stage for documentation and discussion of issues related to pediatric exercise science, highlighting the many ways in which children are not small adults. What are children’s physiological, biomechanical and psychological responses to acute exercise? What are their physiological, biomechanical and psychological adaptations to physical activity and training? What is the role of exercise in the management and therapy of chronic clinical conditions? What are the limits to elite youth athletic training? This journal was created to provide a stage for answers to, and discussions of these questions.

I intend to continue raising the impact and quality of the journal. As of September 2011, Pediatric Exercise Science has transitioned to electronic, online submission. (Please consult the Pediatric Exercise Science website for submission guidelines, http://journals.humankinetics.com/submission-guidelines-for-pes ). My aim is to decrease the time from submission to press. Along these lines, we are planning on making accepted manuscripts available online, ahead of print.

I am supported by an excellent, scholarly Editorial team, as listed on the back of this issue. I would like to thank the following members, who have recently rotated off the Editorial Board: Charles Corbin, Patty Freedson, Joseph Hamill, Stephen Paridon, and Chris Riddoch, all of whom have served faithfully for numerous years, enhancing the quality of scholarship of our field. I would very much like to thank you for your years of support, service and contribution to the journal.

Concomitantly, the following excellent scholars have joined the Editorial team:

Alon Eliakim, Tel Aviv University, Israel
John Hay, Brock University, Canada
Don Morgan, Middle Tennessee State University, USA
Geraldine Naughton, Australian Catholic University, Australia
Alan Nevill, University of Wolverhampton, UK
Brian Timmons, McMaster University, Canada
Willem van Mechelen, VU University Medical Center, The Netherlands
Craig Williams, University of Exeter, UK

To date, Tom Rowland has, singlehandedly managed all submitted manuscripts. I am thankful and truly delighted that Tom is remaining with the journal as Consulting Editor. This role has certainly allowed for a smooth passing of the baton. In view of the increasing rate of submission (currently, 230 submissions per year), the structure of the Editorial team has been changed. We have now added two Associate Editors:

Stewart Trost, Oregon State University, USA
Bruce Alpert, University of Tennessee, USA

Finally, we are joined by Izabella Ludwa, who is dependably and adeptly serving as Editorial Assistant.

I thank each of the team members for agreeing to take on their very important role. I trust that the new Editorial team will be instrumental in supporting and furthering the high quality contributions and scientific impact of our journal to the field of pediatric exercise science.

I have accepted the baton with a great sense of responsibility. I feel privileged to serve the pediatric exercise science community. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, suggestion, or ideas.

Bareket Falk
Editor

References