

The Cost of Professionalism

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During the past four years the HEDIR has held numerous conversations on the role of the profession, its role in the health care reform movement, and how other professions view us. Throughout these lively conversations, debates are held on what we can do to enhance our profession. It is obvious that no single effort will be sufficient to advance the profession, but it is clear that we all can (and should) do our part to help advance the profession. This editorial gives a view that all may not agree with, and I welcome responses to what I'm about to say.

The question I pose to the readership of this journal, and to the profession, is "What is the cost of professionalism?", or more precisely, "What are YOU willing to pay to promote the health education profession." Realizing that we have all paid (in terms of money, time, effort) to go to school to become health educators, I am challenging you to consider what we (you and me) are currently doing to help the profession with your money.

Besides one's schooling, I see three main areas of "professional" expenses:

1. Participating (joining) professional organizations such as American Public Health Association (<http://www.apha.org/>), the American School Health Association (<http://www.ashaweb.org/>), the Association for Advancement of Health Education's web page is located at: <http://www.aahperd.org/aahe/aahe.html>, and the Society for Public Health Education (<http://www.sophe.org/>);
2. Maintaining one's professional knowledge through continuing education (i.e., CHES, CHES hours, attending conferences);
3. Supporting other professional endeavors that enhance our vision and appearance as a profession (i.e., journals, academies).

This editorial is going to focus on the last of these areas--supporting other professional endeavors. I will narrow the focus even more by discussing the importance of supporting professional health education journals that are operated to enhance the health educator's professional growth and our profession.

The profession of health education is fortunate to have several outstanding journals that are affiliated with the various professional organizations. But, it is

also important that there are other journals that can contribute to professional growth, and they too are viewed as part of the profession's credibility. Please do not misconstrue what I am about to say as anything negative against the health education journals associated with our professional organizations. *The Journal of School Health*, the *Journal of Health Education*, *Health Education and Behavior*, and the *American Journal of Public Health* are excellent resources. But to me, they are not enough. We need more high quality journals. Yes, there is a cost...but what are we (the profession) willing to spend to promote our profession?

When I am speaking of supporting journals, two specific journals come to mind--*The American Journal of Health Behavior*TM (formerly the *Journal of Health Values*) and the *American Journal of Health Studies* (formerly *Wellness Perspectives*)-- This editorial is being written to voice my concern about the profession's willingness to support these journals and any other entrepreneurial activities by health educators. Now, it may seem odd that an editorial in a "competing" journal is promoting other journals, but this is not time to quibble about competition...I believe there's plenty of room for all of these journals. I should also note that although I am on the editorial boards of both journals, I am not receiving "kickbacks" or any other remuneration by my promotion of such journals. In addition, this editorial should not be misinterpreted that either of these journals are having financial difficulties. What I am writing about is the profession's commitment and support to allow these journals to continue functioning.

Perhaps it is because I have become involved in the process of editing a journal that it may appear that I have developed a recent "selfish" interest in supporting professional journals. However, it has always been a long-standing belief of mine that if we do not support such endeavors it is our profession that loses...and our profession cannot afford any loses. In spite of our outstanding organizational journals, it is **not** enough--we need to support other journals.

With that in mind, here are my major reasons why everybody who is a health educator should subscribe to the *American Journal of Health Behavior*TM and the *American Journal of Health Studies*:

1. It is an additional outlet for authors to publish. With the backlog of manuscripts with many journals, it is not unusual for an author to wait 1-2 years for their manuscript to be published. I personally experienced a situation where it took four years to publish an article from the time it was accepted. It is hard to keep up to date with the latest research when our journals are having to delay publication of manuscripts. Can you imagine this happening with medical journals? What if the publication of the discovery of the HIV in the early 80s was delayed due to a backlog of articles?
2. More visibility to other professions. This is important especially in light of the fact that our profession is often viewed as non-existent or confused with others (i.e., physical education). The AJHB and AJHS both show the type of research interests that health educators are involved with, and areas of interest that many other professions are also involved with (i.e., nursing, psychology).
3. Differing editorial boards allow for differing views. We need diversity, especially in a profession that needs to allow differing views on many issues associated with health education. By supporting other journals besides those affiliated with professional organizations, we are allowing a wide-range of opinions to be expressed.
4. An appreciation of the effort put forth by these people. Even if one would never read AJHB and AJHS I still encourage subscribing...at the very least it shows the appreciation and support among the profession for the hard work put forth by these entrepreneurs. However, among editors of journals, support is basically determined by one main factor--subscriptions.
5. Role Modeling. For those in academia, it is important to demonstrate to those individuals in preparation programs that one will need to spend their money on professional materials.
6. Tax Benefits. Costs incurred from subscriptions can be tax deductible.

The cost? Fairly reasonable considering the impact that those dollars will go to show support. The *American Journal of Health Behavior's*TM subscription rate is \$72.00 a year (6 issues), whereas the *American Journal of Health Studies* charges \$27.50 for 4 issues. Thus, I am asking that health educators spend \$97.50 to support the entrepreneurial risks that these publishers

have taken. Let's assume that the average salary for the health educator reading this is \$25,000...we are looking at less than .4% of one's salary. Now, I realize that we spend money on other professional ventures...but we must stop making excuses and help our profession's growth by "investing" in the future of these journals.

Finally, let's say that the editors-in-chiefs of both journals become incredibly wealthy by their efforts. My response is "Good for them!" That is the entrepreneurial spirit that has made America great--if you are willing to work hard, and take a risk with one's own money, time, energy, then they deserve to succeed. As health educators we should be proud of their accomplishments. If they do succeed, and become rich beyond their dreams, then we are also sending a message that the profession will support those who are willing to take risks...and who knows who we have out there with the entrepreneurial spirit that can further add to our advancement and credibility?

Information about subscribing to the *American Journal of Health Behavior*TM can be downloaded by going to <http://131.230.221.136/ajhb/form3.pdf>. Information about subscribing to the *American Journal of Health Studies* can be obtain by going to <http://131.230.221.136/iejhe/paid/1998/number2/ajhs.jpg>.