

A Tribute

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Tribute: "Praise given in gratitude, esteem, or regard."

Adapted from Webster's Desk Dictionary of the English Language

In his editorial for *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* in January 1991, Dr. Marvin Birnbaum reported on the past, present, and future for the "neophyte" journal.⁽¹⁾ In this editorial, Dr. Birnbaum (Marv as he is best known) explained that since 1979 the journal had focused on publishing proceedings from world congresses that had been supported by the World Association for Emergency and Disaster Medicine (later changed to WADEM). In the 1991 editorial it was stated that there was a need for publication of peer-reviewed work in the fields of prehospital care and disaster medicine with the future predicted to have an increased submission of quality manuscripts and bi-monthly publication of *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*. Both future goals were met.

This year has brought major changes to *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*. The arrangement with Cambridge University Press has been successful and provides the journal the support of a major publisher. Papers accepted for publication in the journal are now available pre-publication on the Internet allowing for early dissemination of information. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* is adopting an electronic manuscript tracking process that will increase peer review and publishing efficiency. The number and quality of manuscripts submitted to date for 2011 are exceeding those of any of the previous 25 years of the journal.

The many authors, reviewers, and members of the Editorial Board who have dedicated time to developing *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* into a recognized international scientific title share in the success. But one person, Dr. Marvin Birnbaum, is acknowledged by all as the main energy behind the development of the journal over the past two and a half decades. Marv has dedicated his career and at times risked his mental health to bring *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* to the forefront as a scientific journal.

Dr. Steve Rottman, president of WADEM from 1997–2001, relates that along with R. Adams Crowley and Peter Safar, Marv was one of the founders of the journal, which was originally titled the *Journal of the World Association for Emergency and Disaster Medicine*. The journal was started before Emergency Medicine was established as a medical specialty. At that time, the scientific knowledge base for prehospital care and disaster medicine was limited and not considered by most in organized medicine as legitimate or an appropriate academic endeavor. Only a few, including Marv, recognized the need for analysis and study of prehospital care and disaster medicine to allow for development of the fields. Quoting Dr. Rottman, "The journal *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* became the scholastic glue that kept prehospital and disaster medicine relevant."

As the *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* Editor-in-Chief, Marv brought a unique perspective to the journal. He considered every submitted manuscript to have possible merit and when possible put great importance on publishing papers that had potential to advance knowledge. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* launched many academic careers by publishing, with enduring editorial assistance, a new researcher's first paper (the present author of this editorial included). Marv has often spoke of how his greatest accomplishment as Editor-in-Chief was in seeing the value of an author's work no matter how poorly written and helping the author revise the manuscript so that as a published piece it could stand the scrutiny of scientific review. Again quoting Dr. Rottman, "Marv approached *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* as a means to educate prehospital and disaster researchers throughout the world by means of editorial

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work on papers that needed publishing for all to see while authored by those who might never have published before and had little command of English.” To best illustrate this point, I refer again to Dr. Rottman who tells of Marv working at home late into the evening to rewrite a work to return to an author for approval and to make it presentable for publication. Dr. Rottman sums up this philosophy by saying Marv mentored authors in how to prepare a scientific manuscript by painstakingly working on the rewrites himself.

Keeping *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* viable and unique has been a rocky road. In the early years of the journal, Marv was able to develop a supporting relationship with the University of Wisconsin that was key to survival of the journal. The actual publication and distribution of the journal was a continual challenge that placed Marv in the position of publishing business manager as well as Editor-in-Chief. Financial threats have at times been extreme, particularly in the mid-1990s during which time Marv along with Dr. Ernesto Pretto were key in continued publication of the journal. For Marv, *Prehospital and Disaster*

Medicine has been a commitment that has required innumerable hours and energy. Always humble, Marv will credit other journal supporters for the success of *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*. But for all involved, it is recognized that Marv’s philosophy and energy are the basis for today’s *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*.

The journal has a future because of Dr. Birnbaum. His foresight, commitment, and dedication have positioned the journal well despite the current world economic and political turmoil. Changes in scientific journal publishing will likely be profound in upcoming years and the journal is positioned to take advantage of publishing advances. The journal will continue to support the prehospital and disaster medical fields in a way that meets the scientific rigor expected of today’s research. Even with future challenges, *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine* will have the focus and energy to proceed in a direction best for prehospital and disaster research based on the foundations laid out for the journal by Marv. His passion for advancement in the knowledge of prehospital care and disaster medicine will exist within every future issue of the journal.

Reference

1. Birnbaum ML: Editor’ Report (1991): Past, Present, Future. *Prehosp Disaster Med* 1991;6:7–8.