Blood Cancer Discovery Turns One

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We enter the second year of Blood Cancer Discovery with confidence that it is on track to become a must-read journal for the field and a catalyst of blood cancer research initiatives.

This July issue marks the first anniversary of Blood Cancer Discovery. Celebrating this milestone, we would like to reflect on the journal’s accomplishments in this historic year.

First and foremost, we celebrate you—the community that constitutes the journal. We are grateful to all authors who entrusted their studies to Blood Cancer Discovery, to the journal’s stellar board of Scientific Editors, to expert peer reviewers, to the in-house publishing team, and to the journal’s expanding readership. We are excited to be a home of excellent research from prominent labs as well as from up-and-coming investigators from all over the globe. Your contributions serve to validate that the journal is fulfilling its mission.

This mission is twofold. Above all, it is to inspire, facilitate, and broadly disseminate important discoveries about hematologic malignancies. Complementing it is the societal mission: Being part of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), we see the journal as a platform for cancer researchers, clinicians, and patients to identify and brainstorm challenges, and to advocate for blood cancer research in the society.

Toward our first goal, Blood Cancer Discovery has published cutting-edge research articles on a broad spectrum of topics. As blood cancers have been clinically categorized as leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma, a lot of fundamental research has become specialized in one of these categories. Reflecting these three major specialties are the journal’s collections on Leukemia, Lymphoma, and Myeloma. In each specialty we have prioritized content of broadest interest, as discoveries made in one disease often inspire new understanding in other fields. The “Blood Cancer Discovery Highlights” collection illustrates this cross-talk within and beyond hematologic malignancies.

We have published fundamental studies delineating how genetic and epigenetic alterations induce metabolic, transcriptional, immune recognition, and inflammatory pathways that drive oncogenic transformation and progression and conversely, how cancer dependence on these oncogenic pathways can be exploited for therapy. These processes are not confined to malignant cells, and articles published in Blood Cancer Discovery have extended the recognition of the tumor microenvironment and the immune system as powerful forces shaping oncogenesis and responses to cancer-directed therapies, and as promising targets of therapeutic interventions.

The journal has published clinical research at all phases: drug development in preclinical disease models, a clinical trial, molecular events underlying clinical responses and resistance to therapies postapproval, and real-world epidemiology. Many of these topics have been major avenues of development for the field as anticipated in the inaugural Editorial (1). In addition, we have covered urgent questions emergent from the pandemic: the impact of blood cancer and of anticancer therapies on responses to COVID-19 infection and vaccination.

Blood Cancer Discovery offers many formats for views and reviews: from pointed comments on an article (In the Spotlight) to forward-looking insights on a specific question (In Focus) to broad overviews (Reviews and Perspectives). The “Science In Society” section addresses timely issues concerning policy, public health, and the socioeconomic role of research. Our first article in this format tackled the long-standing issue that African American patients are underrepresented in multiple myeloma clinical studies and that benefits of new treatments are minimal in this population (2). The article reported recommendations developed jointly by the AACR and FDA for clinical trial stakeholders as a roadmap to build racial equity in clinical research.

We are thrilled that the journal’s content received wide attention by scientific readership and even by the general media, including 107 mentions in news outlets. Online usage of the journal’s content has surpassed 200,000 views. On average, articles published in the first issue of Blood Cancer Discovery have been viewed more than 3,400 times in their first year since publication. This compares favorably with articles in Cancer Discovery’s inaugural year, and augurs well for Blood Cancer Discovery’s growing influence.

Broad visibility of the journal is grounded in the established reputation of the AACR as a publisher, and in our proactive approach to content promotion. All Blood Cancer Discovery content remains free throughout 2021; a dedicated marketing team promotes topical article collections to relevant audiences at conferences and online; editors pitch the journal’s content for press releases; and on the AACR platform, articles are featured in blogs and in virtual journal clubs where authors present their work and answer questions from a live audience. Approximately one half of research articles published in Blood Cancer Discovery are accompanied by commentaries from prominent experts, which place the
research in the context of prior knowledge and make it accessible to a broader audience. Last but not least, a unique artistic illustration is created for the front page of every research article published in Blood Cancer Discovery, reflecting the idea that, like art, scientific discoveries open up our eyes and minds to see the world in new ways.

Discovery-to-publication speed sets the pace of scientific progress. The editorial process at Blood Cancer Discovery has been mindful of this idea at every step. When the editorial decision had to be negative, we made these decisions as early in the process as possible, typically within a week of submission or after one round of peer review. We coordinated manuscript transfers and joint peer review and publication of back-to-back submissions across the AACR publishing platform. Fostering a fair and constructive peer review process, we have been seeking opinions from a diverse group of experts, ranking reviewer recommendations by the strength of reason and evidence supporting their statements, and keeping track of review quality and timeliness. We only invited a revision when its scope had been clearly defined and sufficient to bring the manuscript to the journal’s publication standard. To achieve this clarity, we often worked out an optimal revision strategy through discussions among editors, reviewers, and authors. With this, the average time from submission to acceptance of research articles has been 128 days, with no more than one round of major revision. Having published with us once, several authors have already returned with their new studies—a testament to the quality of the journal’s author service.

The journal is indexed in the Dimensions database and all its content appears in Google Scholar. While awaiting indexing by the National Library of Medicine, we encourage and assist authors in depositing accepted manuscripts to PubMed Central. As a result of these efforts, nearly all of Blood Cancer Discovery’s research articles are discoverable via PubMed.

In the year of pandemic-forced social distancing, Blood Cancer Discovery editors stayed connected with the community more than ever in virtual formats. Five Blood Cancer Discovery research articles were published concurrently with their presentation at the AACR Annual Meeting 2021. Taking advantage of the conference’s virtual format, the articles have been connected to their respective presentations through virtual links, integrating experiences for authors, readers, and attendees. Blood Cancer Discovery has supported special AACR conferences on hematologic malignancies through social media and by publishing conference abstracts (https://bloodcancerdiscov.aacrjournals.org/content/1/3_supplement).

We are in an era of unprecedented progress in understanding the pathogenesis of hematologic malignancies, with major opportunities to translate novel scientific discoveries to improved diagnostic and prognostic biomarkers, as well as targeted and immune therapies. We enter the second year of Blood Cancer Discovery with confidence that it is on track to become a must-read journal for the field and a catalyst of blood cancer research initiatives in the broader community.

REFERENCES
