

Kazdin Moves off 'Center Court' at *Clinical Psychological Science*

August 31, 2016



In the 4 years since he became Founding Editor of the journal *Clinical Psychological Science (CPS)*, Alan E. Kazdin has built the publication into a thriving venue for cutting-edge, boundary-crossing research on a wide range of topics in the clinical realm. As he turns the *CPS* Editorship over to Scott O. Lilienfeld, Kazdin shares with the *Observer* his reflections on the journal's achievements and APS's mettle in launching the unique publication. (Look for a Q&A with Lilienfeld in the October issue of the *Observer*.)

Observer (OBS): *When CPS first launched, you committed to developing a publication that reflected the work of multiple disciplines worldwide. So how would you grade yourself in terms of achieving those objectives?*

Alan E. Kazdin (AK): Our work draws heavily both on multiple disciplines and from many different countries. The scope of disciplines alone would be difficult to match in any other psychology journal. Of course, scope of disciplines and geographical breadth are subservient to the broader goals of bringing to bear any and all science that can empirically inform our understanding of mental health and illness, broadly conceived.

To achieve this goal, we have had very active and ongoing searches for research from conventions and conferences throughout the world and have enlisted many individuals to identify critical studies being performed in various research centers.

You ask, "How would I grade myself?" Of course, I would not grade myself for two reasons. First, given grade inflation (I teach at a university) I would want to give myself something much higher than the now default "A."

Second, *CPS* is completely a group effort. From the inception, with direct help from then-APS Executive Director, Alan Kraut, to right now, with the seamless transition to the current Executive Director, Sarah Brookhart, we are working on the journal together. Associate Editors (AEs) are actively involved in guiding directions, not only by their daily work but by suggestions of potential authors and novel lines of research. Yes, I oversee and contribute directly to this. And of course, the expression “There is no ‘i’ in team” is incorrect (e.g., “equipo” is Spanish for team), so I do have responsibility here, but much of my work is coordinating the brilliance in the APS office and a rather stellar editorial team.

OBS: *You also emphasized your interest in translational articles. Have submissions and acceptances of those types of articles met your expectations?*

AK: Actually, we are more of a “basic-science” journal. We want to bring to bear all of the sciences to understand etiology, onset, and course of sources of psychological impairment. Basic research on core psychological, biological, and social processes at any and all levels (e.g., molecules to culture) is central. Translational work is quite welcome, but we try to keep close ties to underlying models and basic processes when possible.

Consider the following for more context about our emphasis. *CPS* is modeled after *Science*, *Nature*, and our sister journal *Psychological Science*. Apart from the shared similarities in a tiered review process, that also means we publish on a broad range of topics (e.g., various disorders across the full lifespan), disciplines (e.g., psychology, psychiatry, neuroscience, genetics, epidemiology, molecular and cellular biology, immunology, social policy, and others), and subjects (e.g., human and nonhuman animal studies) as they elaborate the underpinnings of mental health, illness, and the critical processes on which these depend. We are close to a basic-science journal in the sense that we seek basic research to elaborate underlying processes and at any level (e.g., social networks, behavioral, neurotransmitter). We are especially interested in diverse models (e.g., math, animal, computational) as they help elaborate dysfunction. Understandably, we can only consider a few papers on any given topic and are highly selective as a result.

OBS: *Are there any significant treatments or interventions that you believe have emerged as a result of research published in *CPS*?*

AK: We publish relatively few intervention studies. Multiple high-quality journals in clinical psychology and psychiatry now routinely publish randomized controlled trials of treatment, and this is excellent to see. With those trials so nicely covered, we ask, “What would be unique, cutting edge, and beyond the routine but excellent lines of clinical trials?” Here is our current answer. Generally, we limit our intervention studies to:

1. treatment studies that focus directly on mechanisms of change or very close approximations (rather than mediators) in which there is a demonstrated connection between the basic processes related to the disorder or dysfunction (e.g., psychological or biological processes), the treatment

- intervention, and more precisely the effect of that intervention on those processes;
2. nonhuman animal models of interventions and the processes they reflect;
 3. interventions that have been scaled up to reach larger numbers; and
 4. interventions that are from well outside the usual foci and disciplines (e.g., public health, policy, legislation).

As an example of No. 3, a study by Muñoz et al. (2016, March) provided an intervention that was offered in two languages, reached over 290,000 people in 168 countries, and in the process poses a new model of care. That is the type of paper well-suited for us.

The rationale for our foci is as follows. First, in our present science, we really do not understand precisely through what mechanisms most psychosocial interventions effect change. Direct evaluations of core processes related to specific (or multiple) disorders, how treatment directly impacts those, and how that translates to therapeutic change are not routinely published. Animal models of treatment also are needed and are not that common in relation to current psychosocial treatments. In terms of the importance of scaling up, the vast majority of individuals in developed and developing countries, including the United States, do not receive interventions for their mental health problems. Novel models of treatment and scaling treatment beyond the one-to-one model of therapy are needed. We are keenly interested in such interventions. Finally, interventions emanate from psychology and are well-covered in other journals. Yet worldwide, interventions are being used that come from different disciplines, orientations, and models (e.g., math models, “best buy” interventions). We wish to bring these within our journal.

In short, our restricted intervention focus is due to our overall mandate and mission, and that covers a large swath of studies to understand mental illness and health. In addition, we want studies that go beyond the randomized controlled trial of treatments in use, unless there is a novel breakthrough in understanding precisely how they work. What are the areas in which we can publish uniquely and that resolve critical conceptual lacunae (e.g., understanding precise mechanisms of change) and critical public-health problems (e.g., getting treatments to people in need and evaluating their impact in that context)?

OBS: *As Founding Editor, what about CPS are you most proud of?*

AK: I have now edited six journals and have served as the founding editor of three. There is no journal that has been as intellectually stimulating as *CPS*. Consider the charge: to publish research from any and all disciplines that can contribute to our scientific understanding of mental health and psychological disorders. This has me constantly seeking, writing, and conversing with researchers from so many disciplines and trying to entice them to join a new enterprise (*CPS*) and its broad mission.

In terms of pride, that comes in my capacity as APS member rather than as editor. That APS would have the courage to devise a journal that defines a new area and immediately seek a high bar in terms of standards is remarkable. APS could have devised another clinical psychology journal that would have split a large market and probably succeeded. APS could have crafted some related journal that putatively “met some unmet need.” Instead, APS created a new area and established a new need, as it were. What

if we brought in not just basic psychology but any discipline that could contribute to understanding psychopathology? That is a remarkable vision. It has made the founding editor behaviors a bit unending. Many sciences that are not covered in our journal are relevant. As I write this, I had better stop here and get back to work!

OBS: *What were the disappointments, if any?*

AK: No disappointments. Well maybe one: Somewhere I had it in my mind that there would be an annual journal retreat in Maui for my editorial team where we could chart the next year of innovation without the distractions of our daily routine.

OBS: *What were the joys?*

AK: Working with the team of AEs has been a privilege. The group has stayed with me and the journal from the beginning. The AEs are [APS Fellows] Tyrone Cannon, Emily Holmes, Jill Hooley, and Kenneth Sher; and Arpana Agrawal, who joined more recently. Each has achieved the highest level of scholarship in her or his field, is a very active researcher, and has editorial experience. Together the team brings to bear diverse theoretical approaches, content areas, and methods, as well as future perspectives of where areas ought to go. Each publishes widely in many journals and can appreciate all the “slings and arrows” to which authors are heir. I was hoping for breadth, scholarship, and comradery at the level of our editorial team — how fortunate to have that achieved. The AEs have contributed palpably to the quality of our product.

No less significant was the support team at APS. I have mentioned the two Executive Directors already; Aime Ballard-Wood, Amy Drew, Kristen Medeiros, Torrance Gloss, and others have worked with me on moment-to-moment challenges, carefully monitoring much of what we do to ensure we are on the right track, and more. In short, I have been so pleased with the team that brings this journal to fruition.

OBS: *How do you hope to see CPS evolve as you hand over the reins to a new Editor?*

AK: APS leaders and the journal selection committee were generous and gracious with me in conveying the mandate and thrust of the journal. As they handed the reins to me, mostly they kept hopes to themselves but remained available as needed. As I took the position, I expect the committee had white knuckles and were provided ad lib access to antianxiety and antidepressant medication. Yet they allowed the journal to form, take shape, and proceed. In that spirit, I wish the new Editor success. I am happy to move off center court and to be available to help if asked, but will try to mimic the generosity and graciousness with which the job was handed to me. œ