EDITORIAL
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On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis (AJCH), I am honored to be the standing editor. To introduce this issue, I reread the first editorial, which was written by Milton Erickson, MD, and which outlines the overall purposes and rationale for establishing the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis (ASCH) and the AJCH. I will discuss some of Dr. Erickson’s perspectives from that editorial shortly. Incidentally, the astute reader will notice a change in format of this issue. For the purpose of historical nostalgia and regard, this issue has been carefully designed to mimic the layout, style, and font of the Volume 1, Number 1.

Many of us were drawn to Dr. Erickson’s work. Over the years, many luminaries, some of whom were Erickson’s early colleagues, published in the AJCH, and it has become a treasure trove of research, ideas, and dialog. The Journal has evolved over the years – often initiated by the talents and visions of its editors. I would like to make a personal comment about my attraction to the work of Dr. Erickson and my decision to travel and study with him regularly during the last five years of his life. I have always been drawn to those ideas that seemed to underscore a positive vision of the human condition. Erickson provided the most complete postmodern understanding of both human beings and psychotherapy that I ever encountered. One of the hallmarks of his approach was his concept of utilization. Utilization is an understanding that in the transactions with patients, we need to employ rather than resist, label, or inhibit energy and behavior they present. It is a way of entering the patient’s experiential world.

One aspect of Erickson’s work is outlined in the item number four of his original AJCH editorial. In that bullet-point, Erickson opined that one of our goals is the teaching of “the importance and significance in the healing arts of the experiential life and responses of the individual.” I have observed, however, a great deal of psychotherapy and hypnosis that overlook the experiential life of the individual. Yet, it is in that rich experiential life that
change occurs. The emphasis on utilizing aspects of the patient’s experiential world was one of my original attractions to Dr. Erickson’s work. I’m sure that every reader knows how Dr. Erickson recovered the use of his polio-wracked body by his persistent concentration and revivification of experiential memories. Those memories had to do with how he had used a shovel, how he held onto and pushed to move a backhoe, how he pulled a rake, and so forth. It wasn’t the suggestion; it wasn’t the words; and it wasn’t the idea of using a shovel or backhoe. It was the experience that was revivified and brought into the foreground. Erickson’s method of doing hypnosis with individuals relied upon utilizing the behavior and language they presented, elaborating upon it in such a fashion that they would bring their own experiences into the foreground. He did that by the use of direct and indirect relevant communication, and the use of abstract and vague communication that conveyed a permissive quality to enlist client activity.

Fifty years later, ASCH has had worldwide impact. The Society has trained countless healthcare professionals. It has maintained an ethical, moral, and professional standard for treatment, training, and the scholarship of professional writing. The AJCH has given a voice to theorists; clinicians who provided case reports and multiple case studies; and to researchers who have provided us with empirical findings of the highest quality. The Journal has increasingly moved hypnosis into the mainstream of healthcare, even though more work in this direction is needed. Now we celebrate that 50 years.

My original concept for this year had been to create an anniversary issue but that soon enlarged to become a double-issue – which would be a larger present to celebrate AJCH’s birthday. But, for a variety of reasons that idea began to seem like the wrong solution. Finally, best solution took shape and emerged: On this 50th year of AJCH we will enjoy an anniversary Volume. Issues numbered Volume 51, 1 through 4, will embrace the theme of our fifty years. Our purview will remain the same and so will our scholarship. Beginning with this issue, and in the months to come, Volume 51 will bring noteworthy theory, research, and case studies that look back with pride, and look ahead with hope to our evolution.

In this first issue readers will find Mark Weisberg’s overview of 50 years of hypnosis; David Warks’ brief note on the conclusions of meta-analyses regarding the scope of hypnotherapy; and Michael Yapko’s and Jeffrey Zeig’s articles concerning two of our elder statesmen, William Kroger and Milton Erickson. Howard Sutcher presents an arguable paper that is sure to draw commentaries regarding the efficacy of measurement in clinical practice. Finally, Dabney Ewin provides a thought-provoking and historically detailed account of cases wherein the subjects’ death was attributed to hypnosis.

But this is just a start. In the following issues we will have a wonderful historical commentary on the use of hypnosis in the treatment of pain by D. Corydon Hammond, research by Mark P. Jensen on the neurophysiology of pain perception. We will feature
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commentaries on the Sutcher paper by Herb Speigel, William Matthews, Rodger Kessler, Steve Lynn, Boycheva, & Barnesm, Norma & Phil Barretta, and Ashley Goodman. Ed Frischholz & Al Scheflin will provide a commentary on the Ewin paper, and Amir Raz, Deborah Schwartzman, and Daniella Guindi will revisit what we thought we knew about the laterality of brain hemispheres and its importance to clinical hypnosis.

Subsequent issue will provide articles on standard of care by Edward Frischholz, a historical perspective on the position of the AJCH editor provided by past editors including Sheldon Cohen, William Edmonston, and Frischholz; an article elaborating an operational definition of hypnosis by Edward Frishholz; and a study by Al Scheflin regarding legal issues pertaining to the practice of hypnosis. And there will, of course, be the continued presence of international literature reviews by Ian Wickramasekera, II, book reviews by Melvin Gravitz and more articles than I can elaborate upon in this editorial. The 51st volume of AJCH should prove a high water mark in the history of ASCH, just as AJCH has proven to be a high watermark in the field of hypnosis and health care.

In the years ahead, the Journal will also be distributed electronically. As a result our subscription base will grow. Increasing interest in hypnosis by the professional community will drive research and case studies that will address broader client populations and treatment issues. Our increasing knowledge of how to use language, and how to develop and employ experiences to facilitate the cure of individual, marital, and family problems, as well as symptom and pain amelioration, will continue to evolve the practice of health care.

The goals of ASCH are destined to reach an ever-widening audience of health care professionals. Therefore, it is my great honor to present this first of four issues of the 50th anniversary volume of AJCH. This issue of the Journal contains both state-of-the-art ideas as well as historical summaries that provide the foundation upon which we stand today.