

## Why bother?

By Dana Cook Grossman

It's a lot of work to assemble each issue of DARTMOUTH MEDICINE. Just deciding what to cover involves collecting input from all across the institution and beyond. Then there's lots of legwork—background reading, reporting, researching, interviewing—that goes into every single story before the writing even begins. Meanwhile, we're figuring out how to effectively illustrate each article. Then all the pieces—stories, headlines, graphics, captions—need to be put together on the page (as well as on the screen for our web edition). Finally, everything gets proofread and fact-checked carefully before the issue goes out the door.

Whew! And then the process starts all over again for the next issue . . .

So why do we bother going to all that effort? Of course the main reason is that it's a way of getting out the word about what happens at Dartmouth Medical School and Dartmouth-Hitchcock and about what makes this place so special. Institutions don't exist in a vacuum, and it's important that people who have been or might be touched by the Dartmouth medical enterprise understand the complexity of academic medicine, the contribution research makes to medicine, and the caliber of those whom Dartmouth is turning into physicians and scientists and health-policy experts.

But it also makes a difference to those of us who actually put together each issue that you, our readers, let us know how much you value the magazine. Take a look at our Letters section for just one measure of how engaged our readership is. Many other such magazines don't even *have* a letters section, and in hardly any does the number of letters regularly rise into the double digits.

Here's another measure of the fact that you value DARTMOUTH MEDICINE: 4.76. On our most recent reader survey, that's the average of the responses to the statement "I value receiving the magazine"—on a 1-to-5 scale, with 1 being "not at all" and 5 being "very much."

And 96% of survey respondents rated the magazine's overall quality either 4 or 5—again on a 1-to-5 scale, this time with 1 being "poor" and 5 "excellent." The average response to that question was 4.82, and two respondents even wrote in a 6 at the top end of the scale. And in response to a question aimed at gauging what's known in publishing as

"pass-through readership," 98% of respondents "occasionally" or "often" share articles from DM with family, friends, or patients.

We do realize that not *everyone* feels that way. A few respondents returned cards with 1s and 2s, and some asked to be taken off our mailing list. We're always glad to heed such requests, and we understand that, to paraphrase Abe Lincoln, no one publication can please all the people all the time.

But overall, it's clear that you both enjoy DARTMOUTH MEDICINE (the magazine) and appreciate Dartmouth medicine (the institution). In fact, the nonnumerical feedback on the survey made that point even more compellingly. Here's just a smattering of comments from the survey:

"I have no connection to Dartmouth, but I live for this magazine!!!!" (How can we not be touched by four exclamation points!)

"I look forward to appointments at DHMC. I get the right answers. You do it right the first time."

"Thanks to *all* involved with DARTMOUTH MED—I've learned so much and been inspired by your wonderful magazine. Funny, thanks to you, I'm more loyal to Dartmouth Med Center than to" closer hospitals.

"DM reinforces my perception of DHMC as a first-rate teaching hospital."

"Your articles are just fabulous (very well written) and inspiring!"

"I have full confidence in DHMC, and magazine helps with this. Very informative."

"DARTMOUTH MEDICINE is outstanding. Even the most complicated issues are written so that the layperson can understand."

"Love your magazine! Gives me insight into the 'backstories' of the mysterious (to the layman) medical profession."

"I cannot say enough about the loving care I received there!"

"I am old and very cranky, and I dole out few 5s in life. Thank you. Fine job," wrote a reader who had circled "5" for every single question.

So—on the very occasional days when *we* feel "cranky," or face pesky damned-if-you-do/damned-if-you-don't dilemmas, or feel overwhelmed by the complexity of assembling all the pieces of the magazine—*that's* why we bother! ■

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