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Townsend Letter

30 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

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In Celebration: Townsend Letter's 30-Year Journey

by Jule Klotter

Thirty years ago, in 1983, Sally K. Ride became the first US woman astronaut to enter space; Motorola began testing cellular phone service in Chicago; and Jonathan Collin, MD, published the premier issue of *Townsend Letter for Doctors*. What began as an "informal newsletter for doctors communicating to doctors" has matured into a 120-page magazine with an international reputation for presenting the clinical experiences of alternative/integrative doctors and practitioners. Collin, who has had a lifelong interest in publishing, wanted to provide an outlet for doctors who thought and worked outside the medical status quo. He envisioned the publication as "a bulletin board for doctors to share their pet therapies and mad-scientist ideas." Unlike professional journals that specialize in one branch of medicine, *Townsend Letter* is a kaleidoscope, a truly holistic publication that has not shied from discussing any subject that affects alternative/integrative practitioners and the patients whom they serve.

The Early Years

The *Townsend Letter* office consists of the dining room and a bedroom in a small, two-story house, which also holds Dr. Collin's Olympic Peninsula medical practice, in uptown Port Townsend, Washington. It was there that Collin and editor Jan Kelley prepared the very first eight-page issue. That issue contained three articles and six advertisements. One article was a press release about a proposed study that would use bone densitometry to monitor changes in patients undergoing EDTA chelation therapy. "Controversies in Nutrition," written by Collin and Kelley, discussed the digestion and absorption of fat-soluble vitamins A and E.

The third article concerned the use of chiropractic and thyroid gland support to help athletes with chronic pain. Dr. Collin and colleague Harold McCoy, DC, had observed a correlation between severe muscular stress in the neck and hypothyroid area and hypoglycemic-type complaints and thyroid symptoms. Dr. McCoy had become a staff consultant for the University of Washington intercollegiate athletic department in 1980, the first chiropractic physician, ever, to consult for a university. "A delicate balance exists between the thyroid gland and the musculature of the head and neck," Dr. Collin wrote in this article. "A wide number of individuals demonstrating muscular stress in the neck also demonstrate symptoms typical of thyroid underactivity." Both chiropractic adjustment and iodide-containing biologics/treatments, such as kelp or thyroid hormone (USP), reduced symptoms and muscle stress.

Those first articles modeled the inquiry, debate, and clinical observations that Collin and Kelley hoped to receive from the newsletter's readers. They made it very clear in that first issue that *Townsend Letter for Doctors* was intended to be different from other medical publications: "...By expressing a minority opinion, asking for helpful information on a patient case, disputing a previously published report, offering a suggestion for another physician's inquiry, we can establish a network for physician communication."

By November 1985 (#32), *Townsend Letter for Doctors* was a 28-page publication – too lengthy to be a newsletter but not yet a bound magazine. Chelle Roberts had been hired

continued on page 18 ➤