

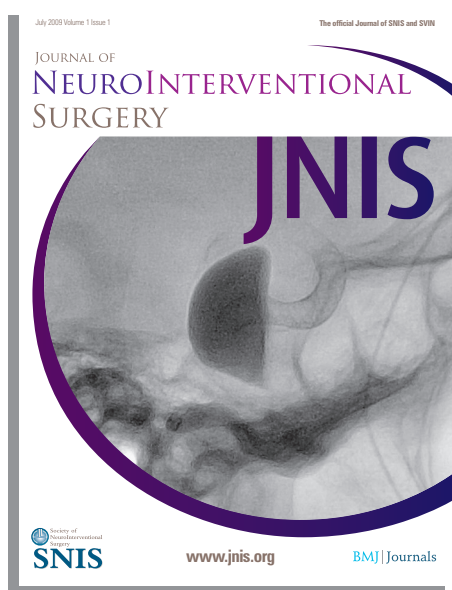
CASE STUDY



affinity

## Partnering with the Society of NeuroInterventional Surgery to launch the *Journal of NeuroInterventional Surgery*

In November 2008, BMJ Journals successfully attracted the Society of NeuroInterventional Surgery to join its Affinity publishing programme. The Affinity programme provides contract publishing services to a community of biomedical society publishers. The Society was seeking a partner to help it launch a new journal, the *Journal of NeuroInterventional Surgery*, that would better meet the interdisciplinary needs of its members.



BMJ | Journals

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## The need for a new journal

The Society of NeuroInterventional Surgery (SNIS), formerly known as the American Society of Interventional and Therapeutic Neuroradiology (ASITN), was formed in 1992 and has seen strong membership growth as the field of neurointerventional surgery has become recognized as its own sub-specialty. The Society continues to innovate with new initiatives designed to benefit its 300 senior members and 200 associate members. The new *Journal of NeuroInterventional Surgery* (JNIS) supports the Society's mission to promote excellence in patient care, provide education, support research, influence health care policy and foster the growth of the specialty.

"Neurointerventional surgery is a relatively new and expanding field, spanning a number of disciplines such as radiology, neurology and neurosurgery," explains Marie Williams, SNIS Executive Director. "There was no single journal that was appropriate to all the research our members were doing, so their knowledge was being fragmented across a range of related publications. We felt it was time to launch a new journal to serve our members' needs and build the reputation of neurointerventional surgery. But starting a new periodical is always difficult – and, of course, the economic climate was unfavorable."

## Choosing a partner

SNIS decided to seek a contract publishing partner to provide operational support, publishing expertise and reach, and to share the risks and rewards associated with a new venture. The Society worked with publishing consultant Morna Conway, President of Morna Conway Inc, to review a range of potential partners. "There were some key factors that we needed the potential SNIS publisher to be able to fulfill," says Morna Conway. "It was important for the publisher to have specialist focus and leadership in their sector, international reach, and proven new product development experience." Other key factors in the selection process were:

- targeted sales representation
- innovative and proactive business development
- customized approach to partnership, goals and needs
- dedicated, professional, responsive relationship management
- excellent operational track record
- transparency in financial allocation and management
- financial stability and spending power
- CME expertise and integration
- ethical business culture and management.

The BMJ Journals Affinity program was selected because of its close alignment to these needs. It offered SNIS some unique features that would be critical to the success of the new journal, for

example, its existing stable of biomedical titles (enabling JNIS to be launched to a ready-made subscriber base), its integration with the widely-used BMJ Learning platform (facilitating the future provision of continuing medical education services) and its record of ethical and innovative publishing (illustrated by its role in the foundation of the Committee on Publication Ethics).

Peter Ashman, Publishing Director of BMJ Journals, explains in more detail why the Affinity program is different: "We have the influence and benefits of scale of a major global publisher, but we have not become so large that we can't afford to be flexible and provide a personalized service to each of our partners. This reflects the management philosophy that we hold at BMJ Group – profits are important, but so is quality and attention to detail. One size rarely fits all and we adapt to fit the needs of our customers rather than require them to adapt to us."

Janet O'Flaherty, Publisher, BMJ Journals, adds: "It's important to our publisher partners that we are a society ourselves, and that we live and breathe the same challenges that they do. Part of our partnership strategy is to work only with organizations that are the right fit for our experience and capabilities; we make sure we're right for our potential partners before we bid!"

## Supporting the JNIS launch

"In BMJ Journals, we found a responsive partner who was able to provide us with practical guidance and support – strategically, editorially, technically, and in the sales and marketing arena," says Marie Williams. "It was of particular value to us that we would be able to harness their experience in developing a comprehensive, long-term strategy for launching the journal."

### Reaching the institutional market

The Affinity team proposed that JNIS should be launched as a freely available companion title to the existing BMJ title *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry* (JNNP). This approach gave JNIS an immediate circulation base and helped to eliminate the financial risk to SNIS in launching the new journal. It also serves to associate JNIS and SNIS with the strong, international brand of the BMJ and JNNP.

### Ongoing revenue allocation

Moving into 2010, the team proposed that JNIS should continue to be part of the JNNP subscription package, that the price of the package should be increased to reflect the added value represented by JNIS, and that a share of the total subscription revenue would be apportioned to JNIS – providing guaranteed revenue in this critical early period of the journal's development.

### Going solo in 2013

By 2013, the journal will be sufficiently established to consider being decoupled from JNNP.

"We were particularly attracted by the BMJ team's ability and willingness to reduce our risk exposure and provide a ready-made audience for our journal by packaging it with a successful title of their own," adds Ms Williams. "This demonstrated proactive, smart thinking and showed us a genuine commitment to the partnership."

### EDITORIALY

The Affinity team work closely with SNIS to ensure that JNIS will attract high quality submissions from around the world, and provides members with a practical and relevant journal. Editor-in-chief Robert

Tarr has the opportunity to share information and experiences with the BMJ and BMJ Journals' editors face-to-face at annual editorial retreats, and virtually throughout the year. He comments that "as part of the Affinity program, we benefit from proven processes and a streamlined system that ensures manuscripts are managed efficiently and published as quickly as possible. We know that this will be a key factor in attracting top authors ongoing, and it's a relief to have crucial but complex processes taken care of by people who can apply years of experience."

### TECHNICALLY

As part of the Affinity service, an online edition of JNIS is published on HighWire's new H2O platform, which is popular with academics and researchers and provides easy, seamless access to JNIS content. The Affinity program also makes use of HighWire's BenchPress manuscript submission system. "The BMJ team's experience of online publishing technologies was vital to the smooth launch of JNIS," continues Robert Tarr, "and being part of the HighWire community, alongside so many other key journals that our members read, was a big factor in our decision to work with BMJ Journals."

### MARKETING

"We wanted to build a powerful, peer-reviewed, international title – the first and best vehicle for research in neurointerventional surgery," says Marie Williams. "The BMJ Journals team inherently understood our objectives and developed a detailed marketing plan around them."

The Affinity program uses a range of channels to market its journals, and provides intelligence gathering and analysis to inform ongoing marketing and editorial strategy. "We were impressed by the team's familiarity and past successes with processes such as search engine optimization, PubMed indexing, and obtaining the all-important impact factor," continues Ms Williams. "Our partnership also enables us to benefit from the BMJ Group's relationship with the media, which will help to build the journal by raising awareness of the research we publish."

The Affinity program also recognizes the importance of journal and society branding: “We have our own URL, and our own website design. This approach really made BMJ Journals stand out from other contract publishers.”

#### COMMUNICATIONS

“We had not expected to choose a partner outside the U.S., but we were impressed by the Affinity team’s professional, friendly approach. It was clear that the benefits of working with them would outweigh any disadvantages of a transatlantic relationship, particularly as we were eager to maximize our international reach,” says Marie Williams. “I can tell you now that we’re impressed with the openness, frequency and quality of communication. We have regular meetings, both virtually and face-to-face; our being in different countries has had no impact whatsoever.”

#### STRATEGICALLY

“We work closely with our partners to provide proactive, strategic guidance that will help them grow their publishing business,” says Peter Ashman, “and we report regularly and comprehensively on circulation, usage, revenues and so forth to inform ongoing strategic decision-making. Beyond basic operational services, we see our role very much as one of a partner providing consultative support.”

This support takes a number of forms, adds Marie Williams. “The BMJ team has provided so much input – everything from financial forecasting and editorial direction to pricing and design recommendations. They truly are a partner to us.”

The first issue of the *Journal of NeuroInterventional Surgery* was published in July 2009 and can be viewed online at [www.jnis.org](http://www.jnis.org).