

## Ninety years young — the changing covers of the MJA

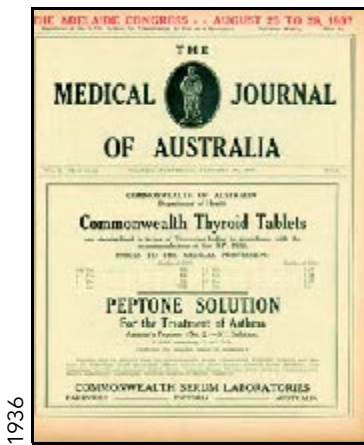
As the eyes are said to be the window to a person's soul, so is a journal's cover a window into the ethos of its editors and readers. Over the past 90 years, the cover of *The Medical Journal of Australia* has changed many times, reflecting the national and international events of the times, the perceived desires of its readers and, occasionally, the whims of its editors.

The Journal's first issue was published on 4 July 1914. The MJA arose from the amalgamation of the *Australasian Medical Gazette* (published by the NSW Branch of the British Medical Association since 1881) and the *Australian Medical Journal* (published by the Victorian Branch of the BMA since 1856). This union was not without some opposition, but there was a clear need for a national journal that would unite the six Australian branches of the BMA and reach the whole medical profession in Australia.

The cover changed little in the first 40 or so years, featuring only the title, issue details and a large monochrome advertisement. This was a time of war (World War I, with Britain declaring war against Germany exactly a month after the first issue of the fledgling journal appeared), financial difficulties as the cost of paper and printing suddenly rose, the Great Depression, another war (World War II, when many of the Journal's contributors were in the armed forces), and editors in for the long haul (Henry William Armit [featured on this issue's cover] served 16 years [1914–1930], Mervyn Archdall served 27 years [1930–1957], and

Ron Winton, whose obituary is published on page 26 of this issue, served 20 years [1957–1977]).

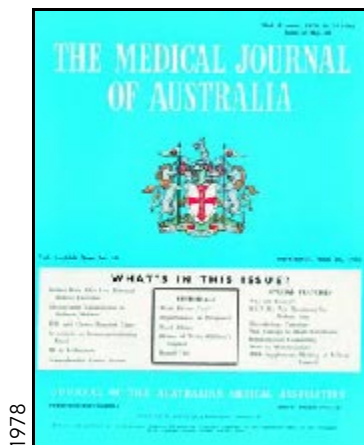
In the post-war years, medicine experienced a technological explosion and the Journal took on a more modern layout with a bright blue cover, better-quality paper and some colour printing. The MJA's content adopted a more global perspective, reflecting Editor Ron Winton's Chairmanship of the Council of the World Medical Association for many years.



1936



1956



1978



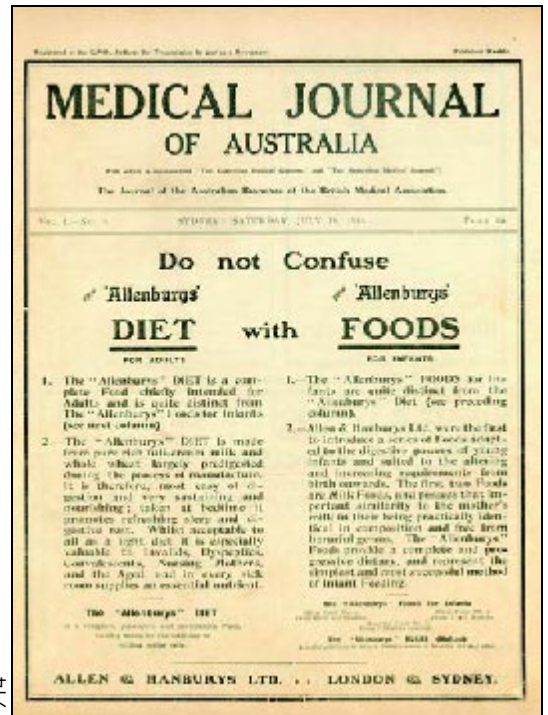
1979



1982



1982



1914



1983

EDITORIALS – 90TH ANNIVERSARY

The MJA also officially became the journal of the Australian Medical Association when the shackles of the BMA were cast off in 1962 and the Association became fully independent. At this time, the number of specialist journals increased greatly, with some fragmentation of the readership of the MJA. Winton countered this with an editorial policy of a mix in each issue to appeal to both generalists and specialists, a policy which continues today in recognition that our readership is almost equally divided between specialists and general practitioners.

After Ron Winton, the Journal went through a turbulent time, with six editors in 10 years. These were also lean years, when the Journal changed from a weekly to a fortnightly publication

(1978), and The Printing House in Glebe, Sydney, closed (after publishing and printing the Journal completely “in-house” for more than 60 years). During the late '70s and early '80s, the covers changed almost as often as the editors. Of particular note were Alan Blum (1982–1983), who came to the Journal from the United States and was responsible for some of its most controversial covers on topics such as smoking, nuclear war and AIDS, and Alistair Brass (1983–1985), described as a liberal thinker and an outspoken critic, who put Australian artworks on the cover.

The Journal subsequently returned to its more conservative roots in the late '80s under Kathleen King with, for the first time, the full contents displayed on a bright green cover. This was initially a space-saving device, but it proved popular with readers. In the early '90s, joint editors Laurel Thomas and Jill Forrest continued to appease the scientific purists with the full contents on the cover, but softened it with a picture and a less stark grey-blue background. Martin Van Der Weyden took the helm in 1995 and the cover slowly evolved, with only minor changes in colour and typeface.

With this issue, however, we present a major overhaul. We've aimed for cleaner lines, a less cluttered look and a Journal that's generally easier on the eye. Our ideas are perhaps most succinctly stated by Joseph Pulitzer: “Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light.” We hope you approve.

**Bronwyn Gaut**  
Deputy Editor

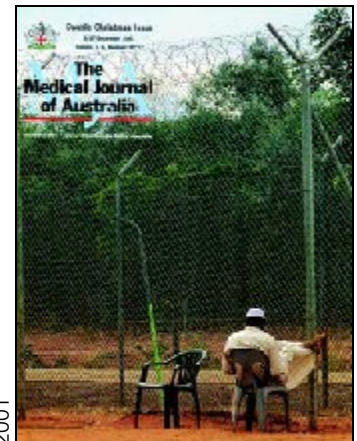
The Medical Journal of Australia, Sydney, NSW  
medjust@ampco.com.au



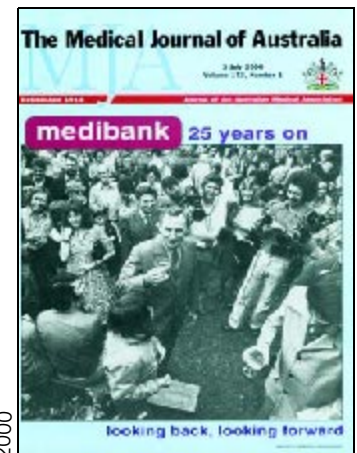
2004



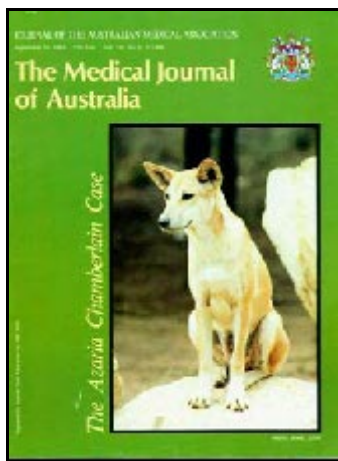
2004



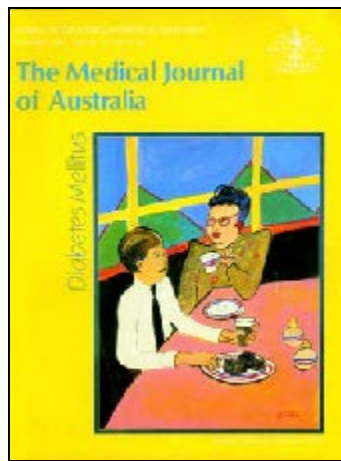
2001



2000



1984



1985



1989



1993