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## EDITORIAL

# Reflections on Anthony Zietman From Gastrointestinal Cancer and Physics Editors



**Gastrointestinal Cancer Editors: Christopher G. Willett,<sup>\*</sup> Daniel T. Chang,<sup>†</sup> Brian G. Czito,<sup>\*</sup> Stanley L. Liauw,<sup>‡</sup> Jennifer Y. Wo,<sup>§</sup> Physics Editors: Eric Klein,<sup>||</sup> Zhe Chen,<sup>¶</sup> David J. Carlson,<sup>#</sup> and Indrin J. Chetty,<sup>\*\*</sup>**

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## Reflections on Anthony Zietman From Gastrointestinal Cancer Editors

Chris Willett, MD (Senior Editor, 2011-2013)

Anthony Zietman was a brilliant selection by ASTRO as Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Radiation Oncology, Biology, Physics (“The Red Journal”). He is a dedicated physician, a superb clinical investigator, and, most importantly, a kind human being. His personal qualities have contributed to his success as an Editor: his wit, creativity, integrity, cheerful outlook, and outstanding writing skills that we have all come to know and appreciate.

Early in his tenure as Editor-in-Chief, Anthony established a robust, collegial, and comprehensive Editorial Board with Disease Site Groups consisting of a Senior Editor and five or six Associate Editors. From 2011-2013, I served as Gastrointestinal Cancer Senior Editor with Associate Editors - Daniel Chang, Brian Czito, Stanley Liauw, Jeffrey Meyer, and Jennifer Wo. In our roles, we had the privilege of experiencing first-hand how Anthony’s

leadership streamlined the operations and mechanics of manuscript review and publication. Under his guidance, there was active interaction and collaboration among the editors, which led to the publication of innovative studies with strong quality of evidence. We also saw how the three-year term limits that he established optimized freshness, new ideas, and diversity throughout the Editorial Board and the review process. His leadership has been pivotal to the success of the journal with growth in its impact factor over the last 10 years.

Anthony has spearheaded innovations to support the journal’s influence on both clinical practice and research. He introduced new processes of manuscript review, journal content and other initiatives including double blind reviews to reduce selection bias for authors, reviewers, and editors. Theme feature articles “Around the Globe” highlighted diverse practices of Radiation Oncology in global settings. He began using podcasts as a tool to discuss specific publications. He also introduced Special Editions that were dedicated to timely topics such as COVID-19. His innovations broadened the scope of the Red Journal, extending new

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awareness of our specialty both locally and globally, in support of public health. Anthony has had a profound impact on Radiation Oncology through his many contributions, as highlighted by his tenure as Editor-in-Chief of the Red Journal over the last 10 years. We thank him and honor him.

Dan Chang, MD (Associate Editor, 2011-2013; Senior Editor, 2013-2017)

I wholeheartedly echo the sentiments of my fellow editors on the impact Anthony has had on the Red Journal. In the early days of the transition, most of us were brand new to the editorial board and not really sure what to expect. I remember Anthony, in true “Tasmanian devil” fashion, opening that first editorial board meeting with boundless energy and enthusiasm, articulating a broad vision of the direction he wanted to take the Red Journal and how he would get there, and it was very easy to get swept up in the grandeur of that vision. But beyond just passion and spirit, I believe a few key operational decisions he made were vital. First, he built a team of senior editors representing each disease site who could oversee the editorial process for their respective areas of expertise. These senior editors consisted of some of the most well-respected names in their fields who not only established immediate credibility and gravitas but also bought into his vision and became fully invested in the journal’s success. Second, for as much as Anthony was looking to directly make his mark, he was shrewd enough to empower his editorial team to function as independent subunits. Once he had laid out his guiding principles on what constituted the most “impactful” and “novel” manuscripts, he simply got out of the way and let his teams run. By taking this approach, he let each disease site team determine the best papers to publish and, in the process, form its own identity and culture, which only helped reinforce the team’s commitment to carrying out his vision. Finally, Anthony had the foresight to install term limits both for senior and associate editors. This system ensured that the energy and expertise of the team would constantly be refreshed to address the rapidly changing landscape of radiation oncology and that the papers published by the Journal would continue to represent some of the most important contributions to our literature. Perhaps just as important, he helped open up the editorial process to the many outstanding and talented people in our field who could play a part in a process so crucial to radiation oncology and how it is viewed both from within and beyond our specialty.

It was an absolute pleasure and privilege to have been a part of his editorial board at the very beginning and watch this transformation unfold. One need only see the steady climb in the Red Journal’s impact factor, which had hovered above and below 4.0 at that time, to know his strategy has been a huge success. Perhaps a more important legacy he leaves behind is the dozens of current and past editorial board members who have worked under his guidance and mentorship.

Brian Czito, MD (Associate Editor, 2011-2013)

Anthony Zietman has done an exceptional job in his duties as Editor-in-Chief of the Red Journal. Importantly, Dr. Zietman really “raised the bar” for our specialty’s primary journal, creating a repository for clinical data that has a true impact on our and other specialty practices, facilitating advancement in knowledge and clinical care in our field. Importantly, the “tightening” of the quality of published studies imposed by Dr. Zietman has meaningfully contributed to changes in our field, facilitating novel and improved ways of treating our patients, as well as expanding indications and collaborations with other disciplines. He has accomplished this simply by demanding (and thereby receiving) more from investigators, yet doing so in a convincing, articulate, firm, yet “charming” manner. His tenure as Editor-in-Chief will be remembered as a true turning point in the Red Journal’s history, raising it from a “radiation-centric” periodical to one that has significant impact, not only on our field, but the oncology world more globally. Our specialty is fortunate to have him.

Stanley L. Liauw, MD (Associate Editor, 2013-2017)

Anthony has been a dedicated and inspiring leader in his tenure as Editor-in-Chief at the Red Journal. My GI colleagues have well described how his energy and innovative thinking have had a tremendous impact on many aspects of the same question here and forward journal. It always struck me that Anthony always seemed to know the right thing to say at the right time, especially in consideration of fairness of process, motivation of the team, and achievement of the best possible quality product. His presentation eloquence may serve as a reminder to all of us that communication is best delivered with descriptive efficiency and gusto! It was a privilege to serve a small part in this impressive overall effort by the radiation oncology Red Journal community, led by Anthony.

Jennifer Y. Wo, MD (Associate GI Editor, 2011-2015)

Anyone who knows Anthony, knows how much he loves ballroom dancing. He is effortless in waltzing onto any stage, absorbing the music and tenor of the room, and then pivoting and adapting his steps to address the stage and audience. Similar to the ballroom, during his tenure as the Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Radiation Oncology, Biology and Physics, Anthony waltzed into the position at the helm of this journal, evaluated and reinvigorated its mission, and pivoted and modernized the essence of the journal to address a broader range of topics that reflect our field today. There is no doubt that Anthony Zietman has brought fresh ideas and diversity of topics based on his experience as ASTRO president and a long-standing Program Director of the Harvard Radiation Oncology Program at Massachusetts General Hospital. During his tenure, he

purposefully expanded the charge of the Red Journal to address a broader spectrum of issues that impact our field, including radiation oncology as a profession, medical education, global health, art and humanity in oncology, statistics and methodology, and embracing the “gray” zone in clinical practice. He changed the existing structure of the Editorial Board to include Associate Section Editors, thereby allowing for opportunities for a more diverse representation inclusive of junior and international faculty. He worked to reduce systematic biases, by implementing a double blind and standardized system for manuscript review. And as he waltzes off this stage by leaves behind a Red Journal that reflects the depth and breadth of science, clinical trials, and humanity that reflect its audience and its constituents.

### Reflections on Anthony Zietman From Physics Editors

Eric E Klein, PhD (Senior Physics Editor, 2013-2020)

From the first day Anthony Zietman took over as Editor for the Red Journal, it was amazing to observe someone so proactive, yet quite the gentleman. The most challenging aspect of his leadership was the handling of retractions and rebuttals. He worked closely and diplomatically with the Associate Senior Editor and had a magical way of finding common ground. This speaks of his capability as being as fair as possible to authors and yet, scientifically rigorous, which was why the impact factor jumped from approximately four to seven.

Anthony's energy and creativity led to many special issues and editorials, including The Gray Zone. It was of value to physics to include editors. Anthony demonstrated the highest regard for physics, which was evident by his hybrid approach of having special issues being allocated to clinicians and physicists. His dedicated drive to always take the high road was exemplified by the Journal's progressive nature and impeccable quality.

Anthony had the ability to provide, very simply, much more information to the readership than was required. And not to be overlooked was his drive to ensure the cover of the journal was intellectually stimulating.

Zhe (Jay) Chen, PhD (Associate Physics Editor, 2011-2014)

Serving as a member of Dr. Anthony Zietman's inaugural editorial board for the Red Journal was truly a privilege and a great professional experience for me with many treasured memories. We were uniquely positioned in time to witness the innovative and transformative changes Anthony brought to the Red Journal. The changes he instituted, from journal appearance to editorial board structure, double-blind review, review process management, and journal content, have generated profound impact on the quality and relevance of the Red Journal.

In addition to Anthony's accomplishments for the Red Journal and its long-term impact on radiation oncology, which are articulated more eloquently and comprehensively

by my fellow editorial board members in this series, other things I remember and appreciated the most at the time also include his down-to-earth yet charismatic personality, his magic in motivating people to carry out his grand vision, and, above all, his care about every manuscript submitted to the Red Journal.

He was intimately involved in the editorial decision for each manuscript, especially those that could not make it into the publication. It is a testament to his commitment to both the journal and the authors. Dr. Anthony Zietman has transformed the Red Journal and positioned it on a path for continued success into the future. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for what he has done with the Red Journal and for the great positive influence he has had on me.

David J. Carlson, PhD, FAAPM (Associate Physics Editor, 2016-2019; Senior Physics Editor, 2019-)

It has been a true honor to serve with Dr. Zietman on the Editorial Board of the *International Journal of Radiation Oncology, Biology, Physics*. I have had the pleasure to work under Anthony's guidance as both an Associate Editor (2016-2019) and now Senior Editor (2019-present) for the Physics Section. Anthony exemplifies the concept of leadership, providing strong direction for his team while tirelessly working to ensure their success. As Editor-in-Chief, he has transformed the journal by reducing review times, shortening time to publication, and increasing the impact of the journal on our field. First and foremost, Anthony promotes scientific rigor and intellectual discourse, while ensuring fairness to all authors. I am always impressed with how Anthony carefully and wisely navigates controversial topics and challenging decisions. He actively solicits feedback from the experts and values their input, working to build consensus amongst his team.

The journal under Dr. Zietman's direction continues to pride itself as a home of some of the highest impact and scientific quality medical physics research from across the globe. While certainly the premier medical journal of the field of radiation oncology, the Red Journal continues to value its partnership with Physics, highlighting the advancement of physics technology that allows us to improve treatment outcomes for so many of our patients. It is critical to acknowledge Dr. Zietman's continued strong support of the Physics Section of the journal, the section which continues to receive the highest relative volume of submissions. He facilitated the expansion of the Physics editorial board in recent years to reflect the growth in submissions and, more importantly, supported medical physics research and our editorial decisions. Finally, I have on numerous occasions been grateful for Dr. Zietman's genuine appreciation for the members of his Editorial Board, our reviewers, and our authors. Anthony never hesitates to share positive words for his colleagues and always does so in the most eloquent way. After 10 years serving as Editor-in-Chief for the Red Journal, it is difficult to imagine the impact he has had on the field of radiation oncology and on

our patients. Anthony, we thank and honor you for your service to our field, and we wish you the very best!

Indrin J. Chetty, PhD (Associate Physics Editor, 2013-2015)

Dr. Anthony Zietman has been a gifted and inspiring editor of the Red Journal. He brought to the journal an innovative spirit and superb leadership, which undoubtedly enhanced the quality. I joined the editorial board as a physics editor when Anthony took over — he assembled a first-rate team of physics editors led by Eric Klein. It was motivating to watch the bar rise during Anthony's tenure due in large part due to his vision, his leadership of the editorial board,

and novel formats he implemented. Examples include the Oncology Scan short articles and editorials focusing on salient issues in the field including matters such as Ethics. Another change that Anthony brought was the Cover Art, where readers could submit a picture, photograph, painting, etc. that symbolized something important to the artist. This was simply brilliant! To me it signifies the melding of our cutting-edge scientific work (contained in the journal pages) with things outside of work meaningful to us (displayed on the cover) - toward defining the compassionate beings that we are. It was a distinct privilege to serve on Anthony's editorial board. The Red Journal and radiation oncology community are indebted to him for his transformative leadership. We all ought to take a page out of Anthony's book.