



Article: R. Rej. *Podcasts Go Platinum!*
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Guests: Dr. Robert Rej is New Media Editor for *Clinical Chemistry*. He is also Director of Clinical Chemistry and Hematology at the Wadsworth Center of the New York State Department of Health in Albany.

Bob Barrett is host of the *Clinical Chemistry* podcast and Producer of the public radio program, *The Best of Our Knowledge*. He is also an afternoon host at WUWF public radio at the University of West Florida in Pensacola, FL.

Bob Barrett:

This is a podcast from *Clinical Chemistry*, sponsored by the Department of Laboratory Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital. I am Bob Barrett.

The cover of the September 2014 issue of *Clinical Chemistry* tells it all: one million downloads! That's the number of *Clinical Chemistry* podcasts that have been downloaded since the feature was initiated in 2009. It's a relatively new feature in the 60 years of publication of the journal, and the word podcast itself is only been in the vernacular for about 10 years.

The aim of the *Clinical Chemistry* podcast is to provide an opportunity to amplify the message that appeared in the print version as well as to gain some unpublished insights from the author. They are also ideal to catch up on the latest from *Clinical Chemistry* while driving or commuting.

Dr. Bob Rej is the New Media Editor for *Clinical Chemistry*. He is also the Director of Clinical Chemistry and Hematology at the Wadsworth Center of the New York State Department of Health in Albany.

He is our guest today in this podcast about podcasts, and Bob, *Clinical Chemistry* was an early adopter of podcasts. Tell us how this all came about?

Dr. Robert Rej:

Well Bob, I remember it pretty clearly because it came about in the summer of 2008 at the AACC Annual Meeting, and the annual meeting of the Editorial Board of the journal *Clinical Chemistry*, and it was in Washington. Our editor, Dr. [Nader] Rifai, invited Stuart Wills, who was then the web editor of *Science* magazine, and he gave a really great presentation to the board.

And it was really how to take advantage of the web that has the potential of freeing scientific journals from just being print media or merely distributing what was print in digital format. And he specifically mentioned their podcast initiative. And even though there is an old adage, "never volunteer for anything," after his stimulating presentation

and since I had a lifelong interest in radio, I discussed with Nader podcasts as a possible project that I could be involved in. And then before I knew it I had the freshly minted title of New Media Editor, and the rest is history.

Bob Barrett: Well, let's go back, you mentioned that you had an interest in radio. First, congratulations for taking another path and second of all, how is that, what interested you in radio?

Dr. Robert Rej: Well, way back in my undergraduate days I had a part time job as announcer at WONO-FM, a commercial classical radio station in Syracuse, New York, where I had the great opportunity to work with Henry Fogel, who was a legend in classic music radio and went on to become president of the Chicago Symphony. He is now Dean at Roosevelt University in Chicago. And I think somewhere I still have my FCC third class radio operator's license. If it wasn't for my interest in chemistry, I might be on public radio right now.

Bob Barrett: Are you surprised at how popular the podcast features have, well, apparently become?

Dr. Robert Rej: Well, at least a little. As you know or have come to know, clinical chemistry is a very detail-oriented profession and I was a bit afraid that the podcast might turn out to be audio, just audio versions of lab manuals. But I think in the end the right mix of author's perspective and their commentary makes for entertaining listening and their obvious popularity. And I think the millionth download and this podcast itself on podcasts is a little bit of life imitating art and speaks to the interest in them.

Bob Barrett: Well, we are five years into this, we have learned a lot. Is there anything unexpected that you've encountered and any particular problems that have been overcome?

Dr. Robert Rej: Well, in addition to the podcast being more entertaining than might have been anticipated, I am particularly impressed at how uniformly enthusiastic our guests have been about the podcasts, and the podcast themselves can be appreciated by laboratory experts as well as listeners who may have never set foot in a laboratory.

As for problems, well, you know the usual difficulties of last minute schedules, trying to jockey time zones across the globe, but I'm continually impressed on how well you and the staff at the journal office, in particular Patty Brady, keep the whole enterprise on track. And now that you have reminded me about my roots in radio, it's my turn to turn the tables and ask you a question.

Now that we're five years into podcast is there anything unexpected that you've encountered? I know that you've

long been a health reporter, but is there something in our discipline of laboratory medicine that you've come to find surprising and not at all predictable five years ago?

Bob Barrett:

Well, you mentioned I was a health reporter. When I started health reporting, I had to learn not only how to talk to doctors, but how to get doctors to talk to me. I am just a radio guy, I know the nuts and bolts of radio backwards and forwards, but speaking medically I knew nothing, so I had to learn kind of on the job.

When we started doing this, it was another whole different language that I had to learn. I didn't know an assay from liquid chromatography tandem mass spectrometry and I'm shocked that even I know how to say that right now, but I have had to learn not only the terminology, but how to communicate, as much as I can, with the clinical chemist. And I do believe I know more than the average Joe now about clinical chemistry, but I'm certainly -- maybe I am qualified to empty your wastebaskets, other than that not much more than that.

I remember an early podcast we did, I don't remember who the doctor was, but he gave a very detailed and informative answer on one of the topics and he must have spoken for about three or four minutes nonstop, sounded great, and he said, so Bob, does that sound about right to you? And I paused for a second, and I said, "Doctor, I have no idea!" But it sounded great, and that's really for a radio guy, that's all I could ask for.

I guess the other things I have learned is that: A. Doctors love speakerphones; B. Cell phones will never sound good; and C. Skype is always abysmal, but really I'll go back to A: Doctors, get off the speakerphones, we can all tell--stop it.

Now I'll go back into announcer mode and say that Dr. Robert Rej is the New Media Editor for *Clinical Chemistry*. He is also Director of Clinical Chemistry and Hematology at the Wadsworth Center of the New York State Department of Health in Albany.

And I am Bob Barrett, host of the *Clinical Chemistry* podcast and Producer of the public radio program, *The Best of Our Knowledge*. I'm also a general assignment reporter, and an afternoon host at WUWF public radio at the University of West Florida in Pensacola, Florida.

And we have been our own guests today in this podcast about podcasts from *Clinical Chemistry*.

Thanks so much for listening, and keep downloading!