



The times of our life: Highlights in *Drug Topics* history

Val Cardinale

When Editor-in-Chief Judy Chi asked me whether I'd like to do a timeline of the major events in the life of *Drug Topics*, I jumped at the opportunity. It was like revisiting an old friend. My 21-year tenure at the editorial helm of the magazine, which ended in 2001 when I retired for a turn at writing fiction, was one of the happiest and most fulfilling times of my career. And, having been part of the 125th anniversary celebration in 1982, I also have a special feeling for the history of this magazine.

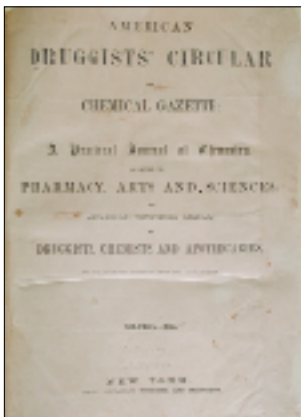
What could be more exciting than witnessing, as I did, major advances in the fight against such old scourges as heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's, and diabetes; the explosion of a new scourge, HIV/AIDS, and the first drugs and drug combinations to treat that disease; the revolution in the practice of pharmacy, thanks to the likes of managed care, pharmaceutical care, and OBRA '90; and the

spectacular rise of technology and the everyday use of computers and the Internet and all of their offshoots?

One can only imagine what it was like in earlier days when *Drug Topics* editors, in a crusading spirit, railed against counterfeit proprietary medicines and all the other quackeries, nostrums, and humbugs of the day; took aim at the harmful effects of arsenic, absinthe, opium, and morphine; and witnessed new treatments for diphtheria, yellow fever, influenza, and pneumonia. Later issues focused on more business-oriented topics such as self-service and discounting, while pharmacists and pharmacy owners took sides on such emerging trends as price-cutting, "home remedies," fair trade, and drugstore chains.

It's been a great story to tell ... and it continues to be told.

Drug Topics is privileged to be a part of the rich history of medicine and pharmacy in this country. At the same time, *Drug Topics* has a rich history of its own in America, as is shown by the following chronology of the publication's milestones.



1858: Eighteen months later, Bridgman sells the monthly to L. V. Newton, who had been a printer and editor before moving into medical practice. Bridgman continues writing and, later, as an eloquent speaker, takes an active role in Lincoln's first Presidential bid.

1884: The magazine, now known and respected as simply *Druggists Circular*, is acquired by Oil, Paint & Drug Publishing Co. Coincidentally, McKesson & Robbins, the drug manufacturer/wholesaler, launches a pocket-sized magazine called

Drug Topics to serve as a house organ, offering a pot-pourri of industry news, pricing updates, market trends, and business tips.

1920: McKesson & Robbins turns over *Drug Topics* to Jerry McQuade, its dynamic editor, who introduces a new monthly format for the now-independent publication.

1931: *Drug Topics* becomes the first business publication to be audited by BPA, an independent organization that verifies media circulation.

Year	Circulation	Percentage of Total
1920	100,000	100%
1921	110,000	110%
1922	120,000	120%
1923	130,000	130%
1924	140,000	140%
1925	150,000	150%
1926	160,000	160%
1927	170,000	170%
1928	180,000	180%
1929	190,000	190%
1930	200,000	200%
1931	210,000	210%

PAST

1934: In a stunning move, McQuade turns the pocket-sized *Drug Topics* into a weekly tabloid backed by a team of 180 correspondents. This major change wins wide praise among other editors and is still hailed as one of the boldest departures in business paper publishing.

1940: In December, *Drug Topics* buys *Druggists Circular*, assuming its numbering process, Red Book Price List, and several features and promotions. (Wartime newsprint shortages in the 1940s, along with economic factors, force *Drug Topics* to revert to a twice-a-month publishing schedule.)

1957: *Drug Topics*, incorporating *Druggists Circular*, celebrates 100 years of publishing.

1969: *Drug Topics*, the flagship publication of Topics Publishing Co. in New York City, is sold to Medical Economics Co., a medical publishing firm based in New Jersey.

1976: Medical Economics Co., then a division of Litton Industries, redesigns *Drug Topics* into a standard magazine format with a blend of news and features.

1980: *Drug Topics* makes a series of changes, offering more emphasis on news and personalities, opinion pieces, how-to and service articles, and original research.

1981: Medical Economics Co. is acquired by International Thomson Organization, based in Toronto and London, with publishing interests in several fields.

1982: *Drug Topics*, celebrating its 125th anniversary with two special issues and a series of features and events, forms a new editorial advisory board representing all walks of pharmacy and publishes its first national pharmacist-salary survey.

1984: A bold newsmagazine format is launched, delivering more news more frequently to the entire pharmacy profession.

At the same time, *Drug Topics* introduces the first of what is to become one of its hallmarks—sponsored supplements on a single theme—and enters the computer age by installing text-processing units for the preparation of editorial content.

1986: *Drug Topics* adds a monthly Continuing Education section and a quarterly section for health-system pharmacists under the *Hospital Pharmacist Report* name.



1987: *Drug Topics* expands *Hospital Pharmacist Report* into a separate monthly publication and introduces a Council of Pharmacists, a group of 1,200 grassroots pharmacists to provide feedback on issues and trends.

1994: A new editorial format continues the newsmagazine approach but offers expanded coverage of the pharmacy field and more user-friendly graphics.

1997: In its 140th anniversary year, *Drug Topics* introduces its own Web site—drugtopics.com—which includes stories from the print edition as well as several exclusive news items. *Drug Topics* is honored with an Editorial Excellence Award in the retailing category by *Folio: The Magazine for Magazine Management*.

1999: *Drug Topics* is one of 42 winners among 1,128 entries in the American Business Press' annual Neal competition, receiving a Certificate of Merit for a series of commentaries by its editor.

2000: *Drug Topics* face-lifts its Web site as part of a continuing process of innovation and renovation, offering more late-breaking news and exclusive

features, a larger inventory of CE articles, a forum for the airing of views, and a search capability.

2002: A monthly *Health-System Edition* is launched within the pages of *Drug Topics*, offering a new platform for the delivery of health-system pharmacy news but continuing several popular features of *Hospital Pharmacist Report*, which was discontinued.

2003: *Drug Topics* and other magazines within International Thomson's Medical Economics Co. are acquired by Advanstar Communications, based in Duluth, Minn., joining a growing group of specialized publications in a variety of fields.

2005: A new design offers a more readable and direct approach, featuring new color-coded sections for easy reference, and other editorial changes.



2006: *Drug Topics* readers are invited to join a national research panel and share their views on pharmacy issues by responding to on-line surveys. New, too, is a weekly e-newsletter—Hot Off the Press—that includes exclusive on-line content as well as links to articles from the magazine.

2007: Happy 150th, *Drug Topics*! Many more wonderful years!

THE AUTHOR, the former editor of *Drug Topics*, recently published his first novel and is writing children's stories.