

## Editor's Foreword

This issue of the *Journal* is comprised of opinions and ruminations about near-death experiences (NDEs). Once again, contributors affirm the “International” in the *Journal's* source organization, the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS), with contributors from Germany, the Netherlands, the U.K., and the U.S.

NDE investigator P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D., opens the issue with a Guest Editorial in which she shares her current perspective on the source of transformation in NDEs and related experiences. Her conceptualization of a “threshold experience” arose from her most recent book, *Near-Death Experiences: The Rest of the Story*.

That book is the focus of the next work in this issue, a book review by Hawaiian consulting physician John L. Turner, M.D. He approaches his review with an emphasis on Atwater's thesis in the book that NDEs indicate a human trajectory toward an evolution of consciousness.

Next, English author Robert McLuhan, B.A., B.Litt., turns his experience investigating and writing about paranormal research and its skeptics to reviewing Ornella Corazza's recent book, *Near-Death Experiences: Exploring the Mind-Body Connection*. McLuhan finds in the book a new perspective grounded in Eastern philosophy, and he enumerates both the few topics he would have liked to read more about and the more plentiful ones he found conceptually fresh and stimulating.

The first of six Letters to the Editor addresses a fundamental topic regarding NDEs: their definition and criteria. In it, German Doctor of Medicine Birk Engmann expresses his views about the inadequacy of the term “near-death experience.” His critique is aimed at both the experiential and the death-proximity aspects of the term.

In the second letter, psychiatrist and preeminent NDE researcher Bruce Greyson responds to Engmann. Greyson summarizes how, over the past nearly-four decades, scholars in the field of near-death studies have addressed Engmann's points of criticism.

In the third letter, the focus moves from definition of and criteria for NDEs to their demographic prevalence. Three member of Merkawah, the Dutch branch of IANDS—Ruud van Wees, M.A.; Jim van der Hey-

den; and Rudolf Smit—critique the oft-quoted 5% prevalence of NDEs that presumably originated from Gallup and Proctor's 1982 classic book, *Adventures in Immortality*. They underscore the need for research on this most fundamental of data about NDEs.

The focus then turns from prevalence to phenomenology in the fourth letter from U.S. author Robert Perry, B.A., who lives currently in the U.K. He muses on the many factors that seem to contribute to NDErs' subjective sense that their NDEs were real, and he concludes with the hope that future researchers will undertake investigation of this phenomenon.

Having moved from NDE definition and criteria to prevalence and phenomenology, the last two letters address what is one of the most, if not the most, compelling contemporary issues in the field of near-death studies: what NDEs can contribute to an understanding of the mind-brain relationship.

In the fifth letter, Dutch author Rudolf Smit discusses cases of people with very little brain tissue. He summarizes anthropologist Roger Lewin's and neurologist John Lorber's research about people with substantially reduced brain mass who, in some cases, nevertheless displayed normal, even exceptional intelligence and ability to function in life. Smit explains how such cases can provide unique data to enrich discussion of NDEs and debate regarding the mind-brain relationship.

In the sixth letter, U.S. husband-and-wife scholars Robert Mays, B.Sc., and Suzanne Mays discuss cases of people with very large surges of brain activity just prior to death. They summarize the recent report by Lakhmir Chawla and associates of this sometimes-observed pre-mortem electroencephalographic (EEG) surge. To Chawla and associates' materialist interpretation of this phenomenon, Mays and Mays offer an alternative interpretation.

This issue of the *Journal* diverges from the norm in that it contains no traditional scholarly research or conceptual piece. Nevertheless, I found it—and I hope readers find it—no less informative and provocative.

Janice Miner Holden, Ed.D.  
jan.holden@unt.edu