Adapting to Change: Transitioning an Editorial Office to an Electronic Workflow
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Objectives
• Transition the editorial office from a paper-based process to an electronic workflow
• Describe the improvements and outcomes we observed after the transition

Background
The editorial office (EO) of The Journal of Pediatrics uses Elsevier Editorial System (EES), which has limited functionality for managing a journal's unique or complicated workflow. Until 2018, a paper-based system in addition to EES was used to track manuscripts through the process, which added considerable time to the EO’s daily tasks, slowed journal turnaround times, and incurred associated costs for office supplies. This inefficiency, along with a desire to increase work flexibility, inspired our goal to transition from a paper-based process to an online process.

Methods
We transitioned our workflow over several months, replacing physical files, storage cabinets, and bins with EES in combination with Trello, a free, online collaborative tool. Due to limitations in the functionality of EES, several steps of our workflow are managed outside of the editorial system, which necessitated the addition of Trello’s capabilities to track the progression of manuscripts. We also worked with our Editors to encourage the use of electronic tracked changes rather than handwritten edits.

Results
Transitioning from a paper-based to an electronic-based process resulted in several positive improvements. Costs associated with office supplies were cut completely (Figure 1) and due to a reduction in time spent on daily tasks, we saw a noticeable decrease in journal turnaround times (Figure 2). Additionally, the transition resulted in an efficient workflow that allows for flexible work arrangements.

Discussion
Adapting to procedural changes is complicated, especially when existing systems have been in place for long periods of time. Staffing changes in the EO required initial shifts toward an electronic workflow, which were met with little resistance. A general comfort level was established, allowing for new changes to be made gradually. It was also important to get input and buy-in from the whole team so that the updated workflow met expectations, addressed issues from the old system, and ultimately provided improved functionality that produced positive results.

Figure 1
Office Supply Costs by Year

Figure 2
Trends in Turnaround Times (days)

Examples of the editorial process in the original paper-based workflow