

EDITORIAL

Rapid, reliable and responsive: for whom?

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The *European Respiratory Journal* and the European Respiratory Society

The *European Respiratory Journal* (*ERJ*) is proud to be part of a lively society. The year 2003 has been an eventful one for the European Respiratory Society (ERS). The first Lung Science meeting in Taormina was held, where a select number of young scientists presented their latest research data. The *ERJ* Taormina Supplement [1] convincingly illustrates the high scientific quality of this meeting, which fortunately is going to be an annual event. Then we had the ERS Annual Congress in Vienna. What a joy! According to the latest figures this even became the biggest respiratory meeting in the world. Last but not least, the ERS School is planning to hold no less than nine educational courses in a variety of locations in Europe, and based on the experience from 2003 it is anticipated that these courses will be extremely successful.

Why do we emphasise this? Well, it proves that the ERS is truly alive. It is a diverse society with a huge number of people attending its meetings with interests ranging from treatment standards and therapeutic guidelines, to public health, clinical trials, and respiratory cell biology. The *ERJ* is part of this society, and even more, it is the binding element next to the ERS meetings. This means that this journal is translating the events and data emerging from this scientific community into written form. Therefore, translational medicine is for us not just a fashion! It is what you as members of this society want. We like to be the voice of the ERS. But, don't worry: we will also at times surprise you.

Figures and strategy

When we took over the editorial office of this journal formally in January 2003 we inherited a reputable journal and Marc Decramer was rightly applauded for what he and his team had achieved during his editorship. The 15% increase in the number of submitted manuscripts during 2003 (approaching 1,500 in total) prompted the current editorial board to become increasingly selective, because the number of published papers is planned to be stable at around 400 per year. This means that the board is presently making a positive rather than a negative selection of manuscripts, based on quality (as verified by our esteemed volunteer reviewers) as well as editorial priority. This will effectively lead to a drop in acceptance rate from 33% in 2002 to around 25% in 2004. During 2003 we published 66 extra (!) manuscripts in *ERJ* Supplements, which had already been planned 1–2 yrs ago. With all due respect for their content, we believe that our Supplements dilute the *ERJ* too much. Therefore, the board has decided to abolish the *ERJ* Supplements, except for areas

of imminent priority. The *European Respiratory Review*, edited by Sherwood Burge, will be our forum to publish proceedings of meetings.

We have nominated a number of very able Section Editors who are representing the thematic spread of the *ERJ*, and who are responsible for a strategy towards recruiting the best science within their given scientific and clinical field. New Associate Editors were recruited with a profound science base and a broad national diversity far beyond Europe alone. Despite this global editorial network our verdict times have been further reduced to 35 days on average. Hence, we are trying our best to make this journal as rapid and reliable and responsive as possible. Also we have begun to gradually change some of the formal sites of this journal with a new glossary that should give you a better insight into what you can expect to read and to be able to pick your favourites of the month. Further changes will follow and we will keep you up-to-date about them.

Electronic access and impact

Despite all this, there are obviously still areas that need to be improved. First, we have to realise with great concern that the web access of the journal is clearly below standards for the general readership. Have you ever tried to get access to the *ERJ* online? Was this a smooth and quick operation? Many readers all around the world have complained about this, and it is obvious that this is a problem that needs to be resolved very urgently. The board is convinced that the impact of the journal and our reputation critically depends on this electronic media. Therefore, the Publication Committee and Editorial Board have decided upon a clear strategy towards rapid and accurate electronic access of the *ERJ* by the second quarter of 2004.

Second, although we are not completely hooked up on the impact factor, as we expressed in last years editorial, this remains an important bibliometric, comparative measure of the standard of any scientific journal. During the past year our impact factor has not grown and has remained just under 3 (2.93). This ranks the *ERJ* number six among the scientific journals in the respiratory field. The editorial board believes that this is not representative of the global standard of the *ERJ*, and therefore wishes the impact factor to be increased. It is just a matter of balance: the number of citations against the number of published papers. Our average number of citations per article is relatively modest: 3.3, whilst we have a relatively high number (17%) of never-cited papers. This needs to be improved by even more careful selection of manuscripts, and our current efforts to do so will eventually pay off in our impact factor in 2005 onwards.

Team spirit

One of the greatest positive surprises has been the cooperativeness and friendliness, which enabled us to enjoy

this work during the first year of our editorship. Particularly, we owe many thanks to all the people in Sheffield in the Publication Office. This is Linda Arnold and her team. The level of professionalism in their production and technical editing of the *ERJ*, and their assistance and guidance of the editors are impressive. Furthermore, we are also indebted to our novel and "old" editors who share their enthusiasm for this journal with us and are the finest group of people that we can think of. Usually reviewers don't get their fair share of acknowledgement, but to all of you out there who do all the reviewing work for us, be assured: we all know what you are doing for this journal and we are very grateful. This illustrates that we are a scientific community, where each takes her/his responsibility. Finally, we are grateful to the insightfulness of the ERS Executive Committee to allow two editors to run this journal. This formula so far has worked out very well.

2004 and more

Thus, one year into our editorship we like to conclude that we are still having a lot of fun doing what we think we should be doing: providing a scientific journal that's

rapid, reliable and responsive to all of you as authors, readers and clinicians who just want to be informed about what's new in respiratory medicine. Probably the most difficult tasks for editors these days is to provide a balance between those who are primarily interested in the journal as a source of referencing and clinical information (our readers) and those who want the newest scientific information and the latest articles from clinical trials (our citers). This asks for a very balanced approach by the editorial board and we are striving to do exactly that. For one thing is quite clear. This first year has passed so quickly and we know that we are just one of the transient phases in this journal that will continue long after we have finished our work. So we will safeguard and improve the quality of this product to be able to hand it over to our successors in 2007.

References

1. MacNee W, Vignola AM. Inflammation and Respiratory Disease. *Eur Respir J* 2003; 22: Suppl. 44, 1s-60s.