

EDITORIAL

You've got mail: erj@lumc.nl

P.J. Sterk, K.F. Rabe

Why do you like the *European Respiratory Journal* (*ERJ*)? What do you expect from it during the years to come? These were the questions that were posed when considering running for the post of Chief Editor for the *ERJ* 2003–2007. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (a trained manager would call this a SWOT analysis) for a journal from a European scientific society that operates in the field of respiratory medicine? Can these issues be rationalised or is it just the irresistible joy of shaping a growing creation? It is both.

The *ERJ* is a maturing adolescent, now 15 yrs old. It does not need to be educated much, but rather its overflow of energy requires controlling. In fact, the journal shows the most rapidly growing citation rate in the respiratory field, hitting an impact factor of 3.0 (understandably, the Technical Editors would not allow three decimals in the exact number 2.989 as it can vary from 0 to 100). This rising impact factor shows the increasing appreciation of the *ERJ* in the scientific field, which has been, and must be, the main target of this monthly "business card" from the European Respiratory Society.

Shoulders

Where does the journal stand? On the shoulders of Marc Decramer, Ulrich Costabel, Paul Vermeire, Eric Berglund and Jean-Claude Yernault! Obviously, they had broad shoulders, offering standing room for two Chief Editors. It is an honour and a privilege to take over from these experts and from Marc Decramer in particular. Marc Decramer in Leuven, together with Linda Arnold and the team in Sheffield have brought the journal fully up to date with regards the editorial, logistic and administrative procedures during the past 3 yrs. Their achievements cannot be easily overestimated, as can be deduced from the strong performance of the journal during the past few years [1]. All this has led to a complete metamorphosis of the *ERJ*, which may not have been thrilling externally but was very exciting internally. A special "thank you" to Marc Decramer, on behalf of the journal and all its readers around the world! The 2003 *ERJ* provides an

ideal starting position for the new mandate of Chief Editors. Now is the time to demonstrate the depth of feeling. Namely, that the *ERJ* is definitely moving towards being Europe's number one respiratory journal!

Rapid, reliable and responsive

Are you ready to join us in this mission? Don't say "yes" immediately. First, the goals for the next 4 yrs have to be defined. Whose journal is this anyway? The *ERJ* is "ours", as members of the European Respiratory Society. But, we are also very pleased to share the output from the journal with scientists around the globe, who all have one thing in common: "Begeisterung" (drive, enthusiasm, motivation *etc.*). Hence, the *ERJ* is targeting a healthy, heterogeneous mixture of readers and citers, including the following:

- medical specialists and technologists, who are justifiably worried about how they can most efficiently stay up to date, through reliable information, on the developments in the field of respiratory medicine
- biomedical scientists, who are downloading the articles in portable document format (PDF) from the website following immediate table of contents (TOC) alerts and who (particularly their bosses *etc.*) desire the rapid publication of their data in a high impact-factor journal.

Can they all be pleased? Yes, they can and every effort has to be made to ensure this.

Mission

The strength of the European respiratory field is linking basic to clinical science. This is "our" core business and the *ERJ* is proud to promote this issue around the world. It requires a mission that includes measures, such as the following:

- a strong fundament of basic science, which will be reinforced in each separate issue of the journal
- the introduction of a newly defined reviews section "Front rows of respiratory science"
- coverage of the full area of respiratory medicine, with emphasis on "bench-to-bedside" papers and big clinical trials
- a review series on the latest developments in respiratory medicine and respiratory biomedical science
- concise clinical updates and pro/con discussions in a

Dept of Pulmonology, Leiden University Medical Centre, Leiden, the Netherlands.

Correspondence: P.J. Sterk, Dept of Pulmonology, C3-P, Leiden University Medical Centre, Albinusdreef 2, P.O. Box 9600, NL-2300 RC Leiden, the Netherlands. Fax: 31 5154691. E-mail: erj@lumc.nl

new "Clinical Forum" section

- increased responsiveness to the "submitters" by expanding the "short track" system for papers that warrant rapid publication
- a renewed editorial board with eight Section Editors (six plus two Chief Editors), who will proactively develop their publishing strategy in conjunction with a total of approximately 30 Associate Editors, each having a 2+2 yrs mandate
- continued efforts to further improve the performance, accurate acceptance and rejection of papers, reducing the verdict and publication time, improved on-line access, direct TOC alerts, careful strengths and weaknesses analysis of the previously published papers in each section, and last but not least cherishing the excellent reviewers!

Modern science in a white coat

It seems as if medicine in general has gone into a transitional phase [2]. Respiratory medicine is no exception to this. Novel paradigms are replacing

traditional ones in today's biomedical research. How successful is this going to be? Will hypothesis-driven research be superseded by wide-scale, technique-driven explorative research? How can the modern tools of genomics and proteomics be matched with the indispensable integrative aspects of medicine? It is believed that these outstanding questions require new collaborative approaches, which will change and benefit (respiratory) medicine during the years to come. The key issue will be communication between the experts. The *European Respiratory Journal* is ready for it and has explicitly chosen to be your forum. We are looking forward to your ideas at erj@lumc.nl.

References

1. Decramer M. Goodbye. Introducing the new chief editors: Peter Sterk and Klaus Rabe. *Eur Respir J* 2002; 20: 1357–1358.
2. Le Fanu J. The rise and fall of modern medicine. London, Little, Brown and Company, 2001; pp. 1–490.