

A Year Later – Experiences after One Year Editorship of *European Surgical Research*

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When I proudly presented the first issue of *European Surgical Research* which appeared under my editorship – January 2006 – to my then 11-year-old daughter, she just said: ‘Why is there no picture on the title page?’ I first ignored this, but looking for appearance changes of other scientific journals, I had to acknowledge that more and more title pages now show colourful images from the contents of current issues, together with headlines of articles which received high rankings from reviewers or editors. So, starting with the current issue, we also carry a title picture – taken from the article on page 35 by Bobby Tingstedt and co-workers – and I ask all potential authors to submit manuscripts with original images of good quality which would qualify for a title page.

This is just one visible sign that we are working on to improve the journal. A lot has happened in one year, and it is time to take a critical look back and share with you some of the lessons learned. 215 manuscripts were submitted. We had to reject 59% of all submissions. On the other hand, 41% were accepted, and they came from all over the world (table 1).

All this was only possible with our new electronic submission platform (<http://www.karger.com/esr>), which allows an easy handling of manuscripts and reviews and keeps track of all articles. But even with this Internet tool, it is not easy to achieve short review times. This is because of the largest editorial problem: finding competent reviewers who agree to do the reviews. If potential reviewers are approached via e-mail, some just ignore the mail, especially if you don’t know them per-

sonally and you found the e-mail address in PubMed on a recently published manuscript dealing with a related topic. Some of the mail ends in spam filters and never reaches the addressee, and some of the mail remains unanswered because the potential reviewer is simply not polite enough to give a short signal that he/she is not available as a reviewer – and maybe still believes that the Internet protects his ‘anonymity’ (‘your e-mail never reached me’).

I usually try to share the burden of reviewing between trusted members of the editorial board or experts known for a long time and external referees who have just published similar articles. With some manuscripts this works perfectly, especially if they deal with mainstream topics. A number of manuscripts, however, cause quite a headache and sometimes weeks are required to get a positive reply – and not all reviews are sent back in time (we have decreased the time allotted for the review down to 21 days).

Despite all these problems, after a learning curve, we had in May reached an acceptable time from submission to first decision and now, at the end of December, are at 31.1 days – exactly 1 month (fig. 1). Our goal [1] – 4 weeks – has nearly been met. What remains is an improvement of the ISI impact factor of *European Surgical Research*. This will take a little longer, and only after 2 years when the 2007 impact factor will be issued in Spring of 2008 can we see the very first effect of our efforts.

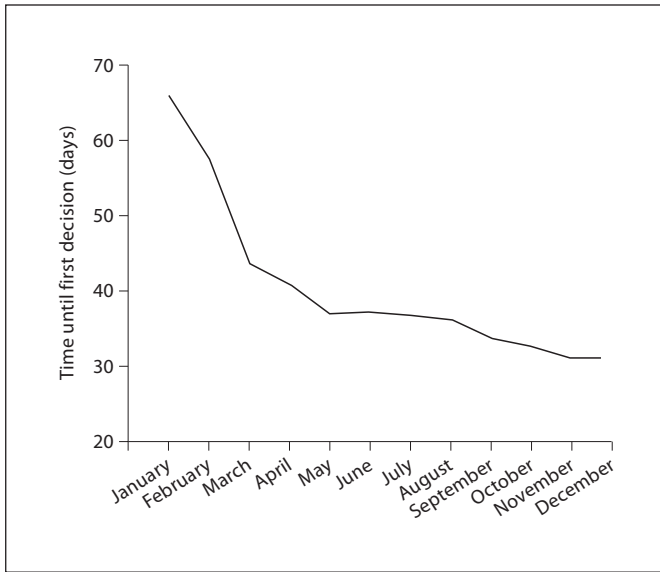


Fig. 1. After a learning curve, we have now reached a stable 1-month average waiting time between submission and first decision.

Rather unpleasant: I was lucky to unmask five attempts of scientific fraud (2.5% of all submissions)! I was really surprised about the cheek of some individuals who submit a manuscript nearly identical to one published with their own name on it years before, and then claim that they were not aware of this previous publication ('the department chief submitted it'). Or others who use wrong laboratory addresses and add renowned names as co-authors without even contacting these persons.

Apart from this unpleasant part of the job, I have enjoyed it, and hope you, the readers, were happy with *European Surgical Research* in 2006. I even more hope that 2007 will see *European Surgical Research* grow and prosper and you will continue to support us by submitting your hottest data and, not to forget, short reviews of topics of interest to those working in our field, surgical research.

Table 1. Number (%) of total manuscripts submitted, accepted and rejected by country of origin – January 1 to December 31, 2006

Country	Submitted		Accepted		Rejected	
	%	n	%	n	%	n
Australia	0.5	1	1.5	1	0.0	0
Belgium	0.9	2	1.5	1	1.1	1
Brazil	1.4	3	0.0	0	3.2	3
China	10.2	22	6.2	4	9.6	9
Croatia	1.4	3	1.5	1	2.1	2
Czech Republic	1.4	3	1.5	1	1.1	1
Denmark	0.9	2	1.5	1	1.1	1
Egypt	1.9	4	0.0	0	3.2	3
Finland	0.5	1	0.0	0	0.0	0
France	0.5	1	0.0	0	1.1	1
Germany	13.0	28	18.5	12	8.5	8
Greece	2.3	5	0.0	0	5.3	5
Hungary	1.4	3	0.0	0	0.0	0
India	0.5	1	1.5	1	0.0	0
Iran	0.5	1	0.0	0	1.1	1
Israel	0.9	2	1.5	1	1.1	1
Italy	12.0	26	6.2	4	16.0	15
Japan	12.5	27	13.8	9	12.8	12
Korea	0.5	1	0.0	0	0.0	0
Nepal	0.5	1	1.5	1	0.0	0
Norway	1.9	4	1.5	1	2.1	2
Poland	0.5	1	0.0	0	1.1	1
Romania	0.5	1	0.0	0	1.1	1
Slovenia	0.5	1	1.5	1	0.0	0
Spain	1.9	4	1.5	1	1.1	1
Sweden	2.8	6	4.6	3	1.1	1
Switzerland	0.9	2	3.1	2	0.0	0
Taiwan	0.5	1	0.0	0	0.0	0
The Netherlands	0.9	2	0.0	0	0.0	0
Turkey	24.5	53	27.7	18	25.5	24
USA	1.4	3	3.1	2	1.1	1
Total		215		65		94

Reference

- 1 Kempster O: Persistence after change: plans of the new editor-in-chief. *Eur Surg Res* 2006;38:1-2.