

## Editorial

# The State of the EJSO 2009

I am delighted to be able to report at the end of 2009 and symbolically at the end of the first decade of the 21st century that the EJSO is in excellent shape.

Since its origins in the mid-1970s, the journal has progressed from a small regional subspecialty journal with a negligible Impact Factor to an Internet enabled, broadly based multi-disciplinary journal with an IF of around 2.5; a manuscript flow of around 600 per annum; an increase in publication frequency from 6 to 12 per year; a healthy rejection rate and list of manuscripts awaiting publication; and a logged full article download of some 300,000 items annually. In the past year alone, the IF has risen from 2.0 to 2.5, and this trend should continue on the basis of foundations already laid by the Editorial Team.

Most importantly of all, the quality and readability have been driven up continually, by setting out firm guidelines and strict standards of writing and presentation, accuracy, focus and *précis* in scientific English. Your journal now stands fair comparison in fraternal worldwide competition with the largest and longest established US based journals in the cancer surgical disciplines.

In 2003, at the last transition point for the journal, we secured our partnership with Elsevier Science, moving the Editorial Office into a specialist publishing headquarters building outside Oxford, where we were able to benefit from superb facilities and the presence of a wide range of professional and production skills.

Most importantly, we were able to take full advantage of Elsevier's developing Internet strategy as the World Wide Web matured and penetrated every office, library and domestic household. We were thus able to project the journal to every corner of the world at negligible marginal cost per paper through the Science Direct Portal. We were also able to adopt and adapt the internet enabled electronic Elsevier Editorial System so successfully that your journal has been edited seamlessly from around the world, and even from Iraq and Afghanistan, with immediacy of communication between the Editorial Office and the members of the Editorial Team. Technologies and facilities which were unthinkable little more than a decade ago have now become mainstream, minimising the costs and time penalties within the publishing process, and bringing new and welcome sources of income to our coffers.

The Internet has provided one of the great intellectual challenges and opportunities of the Age of Electronic Enlightenment. We have adapted quickly and successfully to the changes, and have morphed into a product of the Internet age. There is a vigorous and continuing debate as to the purpose of a printed journal when so much information is now available on line. We continue to believe that act of producing a printed journal remains the best guarantee of quality and the driver of the core disciplines in scientific publishing.

The journal is edited and compiled with the needs for readability of our core subscribers, the members of BASO and ESSO. We know that the printed word still has strong consumer appeal over the computer screen. We also recognise the paradox that many of our downloading readers, whose subscriptions to Science Direct bring us indirect revenues, will never see the printed issue.

### Peer review

A scientific journal exists for and is underpinned by a community of specialists. Peer review serves a number of important purposes. It spreads the burden of expert insight and decision making on those manuscripts which cross the basic quality threshold for consideration for publication, and it broadens the engagement of individuals within the specialist community. By offering out manuscripts to a wide range of reviewers across the world, and by using software tools to identify the most relevant reviewers for any given manuscript, we have been able to develop interest and support for the EJSO, and to create new sources of manuscripts and communities of readers. We are grateful to all of those individuals who have given generously of their time and knowledge to help build the strong foundations of credibility upon which the reputation of the journal stands.

### Publication fraud

Publication in a peer reviewed journal has such importance to the careers of individuals that some are driven to the most willfully fraudulent and devious acts to secure public recognition. The EJSO has seen its share of such misbehaviour in recent years, with discovery through specialist software tools and through the vigilance, knowledge

and suspicion of our reviewers. Sometimes, sheer luck plays a part, as when one of our North American reviewers recognised the text of his own paper in a submission from the Far East. Where we detect such fraud, we will take all reasonable steps within our limited powers to highlight the problem and refer the matter to the author's host institution and place it in the public domain. We also work closely with the international Committee on Publication Ethics, which promotes best publication practice, and on whose council this editor presently sits.

### **The purpose of the Journal in Clinical Practice**

A Journal is more than a passive repository of audit papers. The Editor and the Editorial Board must set standards, direction, strategy, and provide the intellectual leadership which in turn help shape the professional landscape. We have set out to broaden the content of the journal into that of a true multi-disciplinary surgical organ, through a number of strategies. These have included the publication of subspeciality issues, and the appointment of subspeciality associate editors in Urological and Gynaecological Cancer. We have dipped our toes into the waters of cross disciplinary subject matter from the fields of clinical and medical oncology. It is a matter for future editorial teams to decide upon whether to go further down this route.

We have also sought to encourage the dissemination of knowledge in the basic, cell and molecular sciences related to surgical oncology. However, we have discouraged the unduly speculative and material of dubious clinical relevance, as is often the case with cell line, small mammal and other animal studies.

No journal can take its future for granted, as the tides of time, technology and change lap continually at its shores. There are many competing interests, distractions and siren calls to dissuade an editor from one or other route between the rocks; the horizon is always receding and home port is never reached. Timescales for success must be measured in decades, and patience brings its rewards.

We have pursued a single minded strategy to build the journal as a worthy competitor for the established international journals in Surgical Oncology, and to give us a distinct identity in the professional marketplace. It is a credit to the flexibility and foresight of the Boards of BASO and of ESSO and to the support of the Publisher that your Editorial Team have been able to secure this status in remarkably short order, while developing a sound financially and technically enabled product.

The journal is now demonstrably worldwide in its reach, readership and authorship, and it is my personal view that the term "European" in our historic title no longer fully or accurately describes our scope and purpose. I believe in our long-term future as "The Journal of Cancer Surgery" both in spirit and name, and I commend this aspiration to my successors. I hope that the present success of the *EJSO* will in some small way enrich and strengthen the professional practice of cancer surgeons, and help secure leverage in the relentless struggle for resources for our patients; and secure wider recognition of the rigorous academic discipline and evidence base which underpins our daily work.

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