



## EDITORIAL

# End of year review 2004

2004 has been another successful year for your journal. The impact factor has leapt from 1.39 to 1.86, which is very significant for a specialist society journal. The impact factor is an imperfect measure of quality in scientific writing, but it testifies to a growing worldwide readership and to the interest and originality in the writing of our authors. We are nevertheless well aware of the importance which many authors are obliged to place upon the impact factor in their choice of medium for publication. We will thus continue to invest heavily in the quality and clarity of the written word on our pages, as the soundest way to attract new papers, readers and citations.

The rise in the impact factor testifies in particular to the success of our electronic distribution strategy. This makes the journal readily available to a worldwide scientific audience of millions through the Science Direct portal provided by Elsevier Science, our publishers. The journal is now primarily a vehicle of electronic distribution of knowledge in the surgical sciences, although it will continue to be founded on printed and archivable copy. We recorded some 30,000 full article downloads across the internet in 2003, with a much larger number of visitors and readers browsing our contents and abstracts. The most recent impact factor was calculated for the period before this strategy took effect, and we may expect significant further growth in the impact factor in the next few years. We will continue to refine our Internet strategy and utility. For example, all back issues of the Journal will eventually be available to Science Direct subscribers and *EJSO* readers at the touch of a few keys.

We are also fortunate in that more and more authors are sending us manuscripts of a rising quality from institutions around the world. We have seen a further substantial in growth in manuscript flow in the past 12 months. This allows us to

be more selective in what we publish, and to be more demanding in the quality. Authors who have worked with us will understand the process of refinement of manuscripts by which we seek to produce concise, readable papers which focus on the key messages, and which are shorn of excessive wordiness, data and speculation.

The *EJSO* serves many communities. For our readers, we recognise the demands of time and effort to absorb information in a world in which we are flooded with printed and electronic words and data on a daily basis. The short, punchy article will always succeed over the verbose and poorly presented tome in catching the attention and communicating the message within.

For our authors, we deliver a worldwide readership, speed of editorial decision making; a considerable degree of editorial support in manuscript refinement; early and citable electronic publication of accepted papers on our Internet portal; and affiliation with a specialist journal which is rapidly becoming recognised as an international leader in its field. We always seek reasons to publish and routes to improve manuscripts, often at considerable effort, rather than easy routes to rejection. Our growing use of electronic systems in the production process, including e-mail communication with reviewers and authors, speeds up the production process considerably, and affords us much greater flexibility in dealing quickly and efficiently with our contributors. We are also pleased to work with groups and organisations which wish to publish bodies of work such as clinical guidelines in our special supplements, subject to these being judged to be of interest to our international readership, to meet independent standards and to advance the aims and reputation of the journal.

For our subscribers, we seek to give value for money, both in the quality of our product in a competitive professional marketplace, and in the

utility of our presentation, particularly using our presence on the Internet and the resources of our publishers.

Our reviewers and the anonymous peer review process continue to underpin the quality of the journal. We place great store on the rapid turnaround of reviews and the care and depth of thought and experience, which go into their compilation. We use a wide range of new and established reviewers in assisting the editorial decision making process, and are most grateful to all those who respond promptly and efficiently to our requests. The review process throws up a fascinating range of contradictory opinions about papers, and we are most grateful for the forbearance and understanding of reviewers where the final editorial decision to publish or reject is at variance with the referee's own views. We also seek to develop weaker manuscripts with the authors' help before sending them out to review.

We are particularly grateful to all our readers and reviewers for vigilance against publication fraud, which takes insidious forms and from which no journal is immune. The *EJSO* subscribes to the values and resources of the independent Committee for Publication Ethics, and will refer all significant

cases which are brought to our attention to COPE for adjudication and publicity.

The editorship of a major and authoritative professional journal confers privileges and challenges in meeting the demands and expectations of a diverse and influential professional community. The greatest privilege is to be able to guide the direction and philosophy of the journal in partnership with the associate editors, the board of the journal and the production team at Elsevier Science. The philosophy encompasses the preparation of a concise, readable and usable journal of record in the areas of clinical practice and scientific endeavour as set out in our aims and scope, using the English language as a clear medium of communication for the worldwide community. The direction is set for the journal to become the first choice for authors and readers in the many and fascinating disciplines of cancer surgery.

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