Opportunities and challenges: The times they are a-changin’

Pain Research & Management is thriving, although challenges loom ahead.

Satisfaction can be expressed about the following:

• The long-established pattern of bimonthly issues continues. While research articles represent the majority of items published, reviews, guidelines, case reports, editorials, letters to the editor and other items are welcomed.

• Feedback I have received indicates readers of all types find at least some of the content to be of considerable interest.

• There has been a steady increase in the number of submissions to the Journal. In 2007, there were 39 submissions, whereas in 2012 there were 128 and, in the first six months of 2013, 58 submissions have been logged.

• The international scope of the Journal is reflected in the geographical sources of the submissions (number from the country indicated in parentheses): Canada (47), Turkey (15), United States (11), Brazil (8), Iran (7), United Kingdom (4), Spain (4), China (3), Germany (3), Mexico (3), Israel (2) and one submission from each of Australia, Belgium, Colombia, Denmark, France, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Jordan, South Korea, New Zealand, Poland, Serbia, Singapore, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand and the Netherlands.

• Editorial processing of manuscripts has been greatly facilitated in recent years by use of the efficient and user-friendly electronic system developed by our publisher, Pulsus Group Inc. This has also meant a decline in the time necessary to arrive at an editorial decision, now averaging 7.7 weeks.

• Colleagues generously devote long hours of peer review to ensuring the best quality articles appear in the Journal. The 202 reviewers for 2012 were identified in the January issue of Pain Research & Management (2013;18[1]:51). We all should express appreciation for this commitment of expertise.

• Authors and titles of papers presented at the annual conference are published in the Journal, with abstracts published online on the Journal website, and convention attendees were provided a USB drive to access the abstracts.

Nevertheless, we have some challenges:

• The publication lag is increasing (presently about eight months), a consequence of more articles being accepted for publication and a relatively static number of pages of printed editorial content.

• Our initial (2010) Impact Factor (Thomson Reuters IS1 Web of Knowledge) was a comfortable 1.515, with this increasing in 2011 to a satisfying 1.9267, but it declined in 2012 to 1.04. Relative to other journals in the field of pain, we publish relatively few articles, a likely source of Impact Factor variability, with some articles attracting considerable attention and others less so. The five-year Impact Factor of 2.019 is consistent with this likelihood of one year variation.

• The business model for the Journal dictates that the number of pages available to publish editorial copy is proportional to the advertising revenue. In a note from the Publisher, also appearing in this issue, Robert Kalina appropriately expresses great satisfaction with the 30 years of successes in serving the Canadian and international research communities enjoyed by Pulsus Group Inc, but he also addresses current vagaries of publishing in accordance with this business model in Canada. Advertising revenue has declined in recent years, with this potentially being compounded by policy initiatives in the pharmaceutical industry. The details and a variety of proposals appear in Mr Kalina’s letter, published in the present issue of Pain Research & Management (page 173).

Fortunately, there are opportunities available to overcome these challenges:

• Publication lags are being offset by online posting of manuscripts immediately following approval of page proofs. These ‘in press’ articles will be available to members of the Canadian Pain Society and subscribers to the Journal, and will be citable. These articles will subsequently appear in print. They remain subject to a standard one-year embargo of the full-text article on PubMed.

• On a limited basis, authors may have an opportunity to have their articles published online on an expedited basis. The publication would appear in the Table of Contents of the Journal and would be available open access on the Journal website immediately following publication of the issue to which it is assigned. This allows a greater number of articles to be published with each issue, thereby reducing the publication lag.

• We may be able to offer immediate online, open access publication to authors on a page-charge basis. This, of course, is the business model for many of the open-access journals that have transformed the business of professional and scientific publishing.

I hope you will agree that these innovations, transformations and initiatives represent positive developments for the Journal. Pain Research & Management is the product of the highly motivated and hard work of authors, the editorial team, our publisher and advertisers. Feedback is more than welcome.

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