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GLOBALIZATION OF NEUROLOGY: DEVELOPMENT OF THE WFN JOURNAL OF THE NEUROLOGICAL SCIENCES

For the past 15 plus years I have had the pleasure and honor of serving as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of the Neurological Sciences* (JNS), the journal of the World Federation of Neurology (WFN). Although virtually all English-language journals, certainly in neurology and neuroscience, are “international” in scope, origin of manuscripts and to a relatively modest degree “international” in the makeup of editorial boards and ad hoc reviewers, as the official journal of the WFN our editorial board is by design international. In addition, we have purposely attempted to encourage submissions from all countries and regions, as defined by the WFN. Because English is not the first or sometimes even the second language of many of the authors, we have been lenient in the number of revisions we allow when language is the issue. The publisher, Elsevier, provides a list of individuals in several countries who can be hired to help with language problems. On occasion we receive a manuscript that is virtually incomprehensible, and we are forced to reject the manuscript.

Fortunately for our goals of increased quality and number of papers, 2 factors have been helpful. One has been the growth in basic, clinical, and translational neuroscience throughout the world, including in emerging nations and regions. Over the years, manuscripts from emerging regions and countries have gone from predominantly purely clinical reports with some science, not all of it strong, to increasingly excellent science. And with the increase in research and knowledge of investigators in nations and regions that have not traditionally been leaders, we are now seeing, over the last several years, increases in the number and percentage of manuscripts from Korea, China, Eastern Europe, Iran, and more recently sub-Saharan Africa. Currently the countries with the largest number of published papers are the United States, Japan, China, South Korea, and Italy.

The other important change has been the use of electronic submissions and reviews. While some of the early systems were less than ideal, over time most systems have been improved, so submission is relatively easy, as is reviewing. The time from submission to first decision and final decision has been dramatically shortened, which has led to a dramatic increase of submission of manuscripts to *JNS* and virtually all other journals. From 500 manuscripts in 2005, when *JNS* first went “electronic” in May, we saw increases every year, so that in 2012 we had 1,600 submissions, not including special issues and supplements. We have continued to see increases each year. This suggests that an increase in research and the standing of the journal, plus the ease of submission and review, resulting in acceleration of the entire process, have combined to increase the number and quality of papers. Indeed, we have gone from an estimated acceptance rate of 75% in 1997 and 49.5% in 1998 to our current rate of 23%, with an increase in published papers and published pages. I and other editors-in-chief were concerned that electronic reviewing would make it easy for potential reviewers to simply hit a button and say “no” to reviews. However, if this has occurred, it has been more than counterbalanced by reviewers who find the process easier to use to say “yes” and the ability of the editorial staff to more quickly see the need to ask additional individuals to serve as reviewers for the manuscript in question. We still have potential reviewers who do not respond one way or the other. The late Robert A. Fishman, who was an editor-in-chief of the *Annals of Neurology*, called sending manuscripts to such individuals the equivalent of sending them to “black holes.” I also think the electronic process has made it much easier for authors from developing nations and regions to submit their work to *JNS* and all journals and to widen the reviewer base.

An unfortunate outcome of the tripling of submissions is that we have had to introduce the procedure of triaging manuscripts, as have many other journals. This allows authors to more quickly find out that their manuscript was rejected and find another journal to which to submit. It also prevents sending manuscripts to reviewers

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who are often busy with reviews for *JNS* and many other journals, often referred to as “reviewer fatigue.”

In the coming years under the leadership of the newly named editor-in-chief, John England, I expect that we will see continued growth and importance of *JNS* as an important part of the growth of neurology and dissemination of knowledge, leading to improvement in the care of patients with neurologic diseases. No matter how formats of publishing of scientific journals evolve, including an increase in electronic publishing and the reduction in hard copy, we need to remember the reason for scientific and clinical journals.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

To realize the breadth of what Dr. Robert Lisak has done for the *Journal of the Neurological Sciences* (JNS), one must view his contributions within a historical context. JNS was established in 1964, when Drs. Ludo van Bogaert and Armand Lowenthal made the founding agreement with Elsevier publishers. Dr. MacDonald Critchley was the first Editor-in-Chief and then Lord John Walton took over. During Walton's period as Editor-in-Chief, the journal became more widely read. We have to remember the firm link he established with neurologists around the world because, at that time, this journal was the only internal organ of the World Federation of Neurology (WFN). In addition, it was the only outlet where reports from the WFN (research groups, congress reports, committee meetings) were available. It

also functioned as a scientific journal. When Lisak took over the WFN Presidency, he became the Editor-in-Chief of JNS like those before him: Critchley, Walton, W. Bryan Matthews, George W. Bruyn, and James F. Toole—all of them loyal servants to the WFN. When Lisak became the Editor-in-Chief, he followed a new and modern trend, and the journal started to grow its second life. I am convinced that Dr. England will carry the torch like Dr. Lisak and Lord Walton did, but it will take time.

—Johan Aarli, MD, Section Editor

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DISCLOSURE

R. Lisak serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of the Neurological Sciences* as well as for *MS Monitor*. He serves on the editorial boards of *Clinical and Experimental Neuroimmunology* and *Clinical Neuropharmacology* and on the outside editorial board of the *Journal of the Mt Sinai School of Medicine*. He has received honoraria for serving on advisory boards for Teva Neuroscience, Novartis, Avanir, and Questcor. His research has been funded by Teva Pharmaceuticals, Avanir, and Questcor as principal investigator. He has also served as a coinvestigator on clinical trials sponsored by Teva Pharmaceuticals, Novartis, Genzyme, Roche, Biogen/Idec, Sanofi-Aventis, and Acorda. Dr. Lisak has served as a consultant and expert witness in patent cases for Teva Neuroscience and Teva Pharmaceuticals. He has received royalties from Wiley Blackwell Publishers for his role as an editor of *International Neurology: A Clinical Approach*. He has received grant support from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society as a coinvestigator. He has also received research funding from the endowment of the Parker Webber Chair in Neurology (Detroit Medical Center and Wayne State University) and from the Mary Parker Neuroscience Fund of the Detroit Medical Center Foundation. Go to Neurology.org for full disclosures.

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