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The Role of Editors

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Most scientific journals, including ours, have guidelines as to the number of words (happily not letters!) for submitted manuscripts, although the number of words might vary. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the average number of letters in an English word is 4.79 but the longest word has 45 letters (Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis)! One reason is uniformity and another is the cost of printed papers.

There is no reason to believe that long words are more important than shorter ones and more or bigger is not a virtue in general. Someone has said, “It does not matter how big your house is, how much money you have, or that you wear expensive cloths. Our graves will be the same size. Stay humble.”

The peer review process is the best we have but it is certainly not perfect. The Editor-in Chief (EIC) relies on the comments of 2 reviewers (usually), the comments of the Associate Editor (AE) or Guest Editor (GE) plus his/her own evaluation. We rely heavily on our editorial Board members but many of our reviewers are not on our Board, and we are indebted to their sacrifices and contributions. The reviewers are selected based on their expertise in the subject under consideration. As can be expected, some reviewers are more critical than others and some provide a more thorough assessment than others. Also, different reviewers have a different focus and may therefore vary significantly in opinions. In fact, it is rare that 2 reviewers with the same scientific interest/focus raise the same points/comments in their reviews.

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The editors are aware of these many differences, which are factored in when the final decision is made. The final disposition is made by the EIC, and it is indeed a big responsibility.

Our team of editors is exemplary in terms of their dedication, expertise, and fairness and by working together over many years has come to be in synchrony in terms of the decision-making process. We also have amazing and dedicated Board members to whom we all are extremely grateful. We welcome our new members (Table 1).

Some manuscripts receive a uniform endorsement for acceptance or rejection as they progress through the tiered evaluation process, but others receive split decisions and in these cases, many factors are considered

Table 1. New JNC Editorial Members

1.	Cigdem Akincioglu, MD (Canada)
2.	Ian Armstrong, PhD (UK)
3.	Parthi Arumugam, MD (UK)
4.	Maria João Vidigal Ferreira, MD (Portugal)
5.	Gabriel Grossman, MD (Brazil)
6.	Hendrik (Hans) Harms, PhD (Denmark)
7.	Felix Keng Yung Jih, MD (Singapore)
8.	Jacek Kwiecinski, MD, PhD (Poland)
9.	Rafael W Lopes, MD, PhD, (Brazil)
10.	Teresa Massardo, MD (Chile)
11.	Leon Menezes, MD (UK)
12.	Cláudio Tinoco Mesquita, MD (Brazil)
13.	Jonathan Nye, PhD (USA)
14.	René R. Sevag Packard, MD, PhD (USA)
15.	Amalia Peix, MD (Cuba)
16.	Christopher Rischpler, MD, PhD (Germany)
17.	Rebecca Schofield, MD (UK)
18.	Michelle Williams, MD (UK)
19.	Habib Zaidi, MSc, PhD, PD (Switzerland)

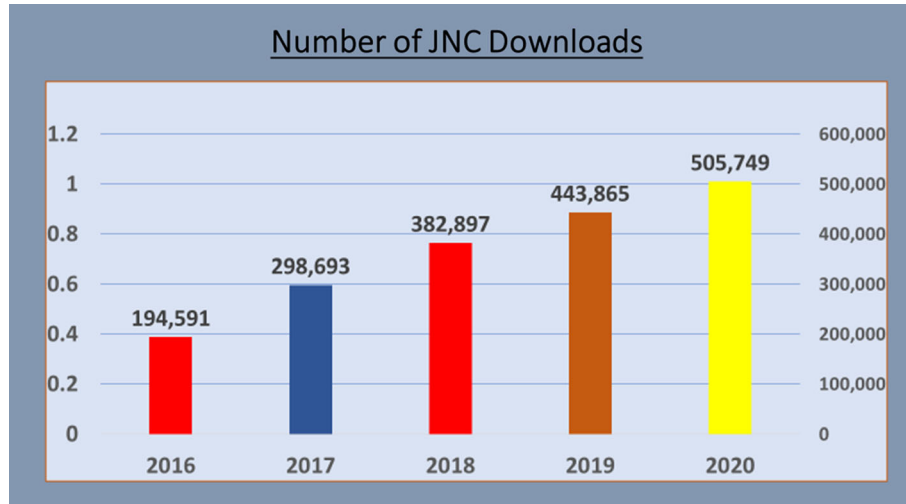


Figure 1. The number of download of articles printed in the Journal of Nuclear Cardiology (JNC) over the past 5 years.

and are unique to each manuscript. In addition, a third reviewer is sometimes consulted to obtain an additional opinion, although that often adds to delay and is not always helpful and we discourage it at our Journal.

We all take the review process very seriously because we, like the authors, are also authors ourselves and can relate to the impact of the decision. All journals would prefer publishing manuscripts that provide a new and news-breaking knowledge that have major impacts on patient care and well-being; parenthetically “New knowledge gained” is now a requirement in all accepted manuscripts by our Journal—constantly striving for ongoing development, improvement, and perfectionism!

On the other hand, we believe there is a room and a need for papers that add confirmatory evidence, especially if the studies are conducted in different institutions, involve different patient populations, instrumentations, analyses, sample size, multi-institutional, etc. The notion that a paper should be rejected because a “similar” study was published by another group in a different journal is not a valid reason, in our opinion. In addition, confirmatory evidence is highly needed to gain more confidence in the specific topic being discussed.

It should also be mentioned here that almost all accepted manuscripts undergo various degrees of revisions and almost always are much improved compared to the original submission. At times, the science is valid, but the paper is not well packaged, due often to, but not always, language barriers. We often spend considerable time editing such papers and our “Mentoring at Distance Committee” (chaired by Frans J.Th. Wackers, MD) has been of tremendous help in working methodically with the authors, at times for many months. This,

however, significantly improves articles and helps authors improve their skills.

Our Journal is unique in that it is the only journal in the world that caters specifically to nuclear cardiology. The other imaging journals in the USA and Europe deal with either multi-modality imaging or multi-system imaging or both. This fact creates challenges and opportunities. Our readers have different needs from our authors. Much of our constituency are eager for knowledge that improves their health care delivery to their patients. Our authors are interested in that too but also in career development, promotions, and recognitions. These different needs, however, make the journal a unique vehicle for the community dedicated to the field of nuclear cardiology.

Here comes the metrics that are used to evaluate a journal’s performance. There are many of these metrics, but for sake of discussion we will address the impact factor (IF) and number of downloads. We should make it clear that the Journal’s impact is not the same as the IF of the journal and that a single specialty journal like ours is different from general journals. It should also be indicated that specialty journals as ours will not publish the large randomized controlled trials as published in, for example, the New England Journal of Medicine and are therefore not comparable in terms of IFs.

In any case, we are pleased to note that the IF of our Journal for the year 2020 has been the highest in the 27-year history of the Journal. The credit goes to the team efforts of editors, reviewers, authors, readers, managing editors, and the support of ASNC, as the Journal is the official publication of the Society.

The downloads have also increased. The numbers for the last 5 years are shown in Figure 1. The number of

Table 2. The Nobel Prize in physics and medicine and physiology 2016-2020

Physics

2021: **Syukuro Manabe and Klaus Hasselmann** for the physical modeling of Earth's climate, quantifying variability, and reliably predicting global warming and to **Giorgio Parisi** for the discovery of the interplay of disorder and fluctuations in physical systems from atomic to planetary scales

2020: **Roger Penrose** for the discovery that black hole formation and **Reinhard Genzel and Andrea Ghez** for the discovery of a supermassive compact object at the center of our galaxy.

2019: **James Peebles** for theoretical discoveries in physical cosmology and to **Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz** for the discovery of an exoplanet orbiting a solar-type star.

2018: **Arthur Ashkin** for the optical tweezers and their application to biological systems and to **Gérard Mourou and Donna Strickland** for their method of generating high-intensity, ultra-short optical pulses.

2017: **Rainer Weiss, Barry C. Barish and Kip S. Thorne** for decisive contributions to the LIGO detector and the observation of gravitational waves.

Physiology or medicine

2021: **David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian** for their discoveries of receptors for temperature and touch.

2020: **Harvey J. Alter, Michael Houghton, and Charles M. Rice** for their discovery of Hepatitis C virus.

2019: **William G. Kaelin Jr, Sir Peter J. Ratcliffe and Gregg L. Semenza** for their discoveries of how cells sense and adapt to oxygen availability.

2018: **James P. Allison and Tasuku Honjo** for their discovery of cancer therapy by inhibition of negative immune regulation.

2017: **Jeffrey C. Hall, Michael Rosbash and Michael W. Young** for their discoveries of molecular mechanisms controlling the circadian rhythm.

downloads has its own limitations as not everyone downloads all papers or any paper, he/she reads (we do not!). Accordingly, this marker of success should also be carefully interpreted.

Some published papers (often after many years) become the basis for awarding Nobel prizes. Nobel prizes are awarded in Medicine/Physiology, Physics, Chemistry, Literature, Peace, and Economics. Table 2 shows the winners in Medicine/Physiology and Physics over the past 5 years. One of the 2021 winners is 90 years old.

Nobel prizes are awarded for ‘discoveries’ and not for a single paper, the number of words in a paper, the number of papers published by an author, the institution, or the country of residence. Some prizes are awarded to more than one person working in different institutions or counties.

It is very unlikely that winning the Nobel Prize was the driving force for these authors when they published their initial work but rather their passion and devotion to their areas of expertise. The manuscripts of Nobel Laureates very likely underwent a rigorous review process as did other manuscripts received by the journals. The truth is that it is very difficult in advance to know which paper or which discovery will one day be considered worthy of a Nobel Award. I doubt that any journal has a category that marks the paper as ‘‘Nobel Award potential’’ when accepting it, and this highlights the difficulty of predicting the importance of all articles.

Humility, fairness, responsiveness, and timeliness are principles that must guide all of us who are involved in the decision-making process.

The rejection/acceptance rates and ratios are less important and are artificial and could be manipulated; therefore, the emphasis should be on the merits of the papers. It is very easy to reject any paper just to increase the rejection rate and even worse rejecting worthy papers simply to decrease a backlog. The backlog and costs of publishing and mailing are among the reasons why some journals adopted publishing online only. Our Journal publishes accepted papers online but also in print based on the preference of our readers. The online version appears approximately 2 weeks after the paper is accepted and can be cited.

Madam Marie Curie was the first women to receive the Nobel Prize in Physics and the only person to receive a second Nobel Prize. Hopefully, it is time for one of our contributors to receive such an Award, but if the past is any indication for predicting the future, we may have underestimated the relevance of such a seminal work! That will be a forgivable mistake!

DISCLOSURES

There are no conflict of interest

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