

LEADING ARTICLE

## The history and profile of JGH



In January 1986, the first issue of The Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology (JGH) was published. This followed 2 years of extensive discussion between Blackwell Science Publishing (Wiley-Blackwell and now Wiley) and Asia-Pacific leaders in Gastroenterology and Hepatology about the need for an international journal in this specialty from this

region. Several countries, notably Japan, China, Korea and India, already had their own national journals, and at least 20 other international journals were dedicated to aspects of gastroenterology and hepatology. However, the ethnic, socioeconomic demography and disease patterns of the Asia-Pacific region were considered sufficiently distinctive and important internationally to justify a new journal with roots here. The late Professors Kunio Okuda (Japan, who became the first Editor-in-Chief of JGH), Professor CS Seah (Singapore, whose untimely death prevented his becoming a Founding Editor), Professors SK Lam (Hong Kong), DJC Shearman (Adelaide, Australia) and LW Powell (Brisbane, Australia), together with an active team of Editorial Board “assistants” launched a lilac-banded (somewhat “dingy”), second-monthly journal that initially contained case reports, limited investigative studies and review articles.

By 1989, JGH had sufficient copy to become a monthly journal with articles from around the world. It was supported by both regional organisations (APAGE and APASL) as well as gastroenterology societies in Australia, Bangladesh and Hong Kong, and was poised to “take off” as a significant journal. The 1990 WCOG in Sydney provided the impetus to increase the impact factor from 0.9 to 1.6, particularly with publication of the Working Party reports – most notably those describing the “Sydney system” for classification of gastritis (this being the early days of *H. pylori*).

During the 1990s there were extensive discussions between the Publisher and JGH Editors which culminated in formation of the JGH Foundation. This Foundation now shares (50%) ownership of JGH. The aims of JGH and its owners (Wiley-Blackwell and JGH Foundation) are to produce a world-class journal committed to promoting the highest standards of clinical practice, education and research in the twin specialties of gastroenterology and hepatology. The ultimate objective is to improve the health of Asia-Pacific communities and the well-being of patients with liver, gut and pancreatic disorders.

As a vehicle for publishing articles and reviews on such topics, JGH is readily identified as “user friendly” to the Asia-Pacific region, although many articles come from outside the

region. By December 2010, JGH had completed its first 25 years of publication. This was celebrated in the highly successful Silver Jubilee Supplement that accompanied the January 2011 issue. The longer term objective of JGH editors has always been “to grow JGH into a leading international journal in the specialty.” Between 1991 and 2005 the gradual improvement in impact factor and JGH ranking among its “peers” was marked by consolidation. During the next 7 years, the present Editors and a revitalized Editorial Board worked hard to change any external perception that JGH was a “modest” journal, so that by 2013, the impact factor (for 2012) reached 3.325. There has been an increased numbers of editorials and high quality reviews each year, radically improved efficiency of manuscript review and decision making, and “accepted articles” are online within 2 weeks of acceptance. Last year we received more than 1600 manuscripts for review, 50% more than in 2009, and the acceptance fell below 15%.

Is JGH becoming a better and more useful journal for our readers? By download data, there appears to be a major increase in usage of JGH copy. During the last 5 years, numerous Special Articles describing Working Party reports and Clinical Guidelines for common disorders within the Asia-Pacific region have been published and made available for free download. Consistently, these articles are highly cited, and should prove influential in dissemination of measures to prevent disease and improve patient care. Likewise, review articles in areas such as viral hepatitis, endoscopy, cirrhosis complications, epidemiology of regional diseases, prevention of hepatocellular carcinoma and the basic sciences that underpin our specialties have been well received. JGH continues to publish major reviews as “Advances in clinical practice” and “The scientific basis of gastroenterological, pancreatic and liver diseases.” The section on Education and Imaging (featured on the now cheerful orange-banded front cover) is also very popular and “accessible” to our numerous interested clinician readers.

The core of JGH’s publishing mission remains original scientific and clinical research. It is vital for JGH to reach its potential as a “top 10” journal in the specialty, that investigators in the region consider JGH as a place to publish their best work, particularly articles that may not be competitive for journals with an impact factor that exceeds 10.

In addition to its importance as a publication vehicle relevant to research, education and clinical practice, JGH has brought the region together. The Editors have come from at least ten countries in the region, and comprise a dynamic forum for cooperation, sharing of ideas and launching new initiatives. The JGH Foundation, which receives 50% of the Royalties of JGH, invests those profits in educational initiatives, such as

named state-of-the art lectures at APDW (these have also been offered to APASL), YIAs and travel bursaries for young clinicians and investigators. It also seeds grants for Consensus Working Parties and cooperative research initiatives. The Editorial Board of JGH is now comprised of more than 100 experts from around the region, whose cooperative input on reviewing and writing for JGH enhances the Journal, and furthers understanding and international cooperation within this diverse region.

With such strong support and concerted effort, the strategies JGH now has in place to publish only the best articles and the most informative review articles should eventually ensure that the Asia-Pacific region takes its rightful place among the top

regions contributing to knowledge and practice of gastroenterology and hepatology internationally.

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### **Note**

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