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EDITORIAL

The *European Heart Journal* goes global: the road ahead of the editorial team 2009–2011

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Over centuries, the contributions of Europe to the science and practice of cardiology have been impressive and sustained. They began with the seminal discovery of the circulation by William Harvey and the publication of *De motu cordis* in 1616, and continued with John Whithering in 1785 and Thomas Lauder Brunton 1863 who were the first to attempt to treat cardiac diseases with herbs and drugs. At the beginning of the 20th century, William Einthoven developed the electrocardiogram, and Werner Forssmann attempted the first cardiac catheterization on himself. Both were awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine and Physiology, in 1924 and 1956, respectively. The contributions of Sir Thomas Lewis to translating physiological observations into the clinical arena also had a major impact. Furthermore, seminal surgeons such as Clarence Crafoord at the Karolinska Institutet, Russel Claude Baron Brock in London, and Ake Senning in Zurich, among others, pioneered the surgical management of patients with congenital heart disease. In the late 1960s, Hein Wellens and his Dutch colleagues developed invasive electrophysiology and changed the understanding of arrhythmias. In a bold step, Andreas R. Grüntzig opened the door to interventional cardiology on 16 September 1977 when he first used a balloon catheter to dilate a stenosis in the left anterior descending coronary artery in a patient with angina pectoris at the University Hospital Zurich. Outside academic institutions, the European pharmaceutical industry also contributed importantly to improved patient care through the development of novel drugs, including β -blockers, diuretics, amiodarone, and calcium channel antagonists. Today European scientists and clinicians lead the way in the clinical application of stem cells for the treatment of cardiac disease.

From a single journal to an ESC Journal Family

Initially, scientific findings were published in books, later in national journals—up until recently a European journal in this discipline did not exist. Only with the foundation of the European Society of

Cardiology (ESC) in 1949 did such a project become possible. However, it took another 25 years until the first issue of the *European Heart Journal* was published under the editorship of Desmond G. Julian in February 1980 (Figure 1). At that time, the *European Heart Journal* appeared monthly. In 1989, Desmond Julian was succeeded by Henri E. Kulbertus.

In 1995 Kim Fox took over the editorship of the official journal of the ESC (Figure 1). Under his leadership, the *European Heart Journal's* impact factor rose from 1.425 in 1993 to 6.131 in 2003 when Frans Van de Werf and his team of three Deputy Editors (Stefan Janssens, Frank Rademakers, and Johan Vanhaecke) and 18 Associate Editors from the University of Leuven took the helm. Today the *European Heart Journal* appears bi-monthly and is one of the leading journals in cardiovascular medicine. Of note, within 10 years, i.e. from 1996 until 2007, the impact factor of the *European Heart Journal* grew impressively and steadily, and is currently close to 8. The journal publishes original research, editorials, review articles, cardiovascular flashlights, and correspondence. At present, 22 500 hard copies are printed every 2 weeks and distributed to cardiologists, scientists, and other physicians in Europe and other parts of the world. In addition, the journal is regularly read by many online subscribers at universities, hospitals, and other institutions.

It is the mission of the *European Heart Journal* to foster the development of cardiology, further scientific exchanges, encourage personal contacts, and establish standards of training for cardiologists and those who work in the field of cardiovascular disease. The number of manuscripts submitted has risen steadily over the years. Currently the *European Heart Journal* receives more than 3500 manuscripts per year and eventually accepts 15–19% of them for publication after either minor or major revision. To ensure the highest scientific standards, all papers considered for publication are reviewed not only by at least two experienced reviewers, but also by an experienced statistician. Two-thirds of the submitted papers still come from European countries (67%), but a substantial part also comes from Asia (14%) and North America (12%). Importantly, the *European Heart Journal*

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publishes all the Guidelines of the ESC which are widely read and extensively cited.

Besides its main journal, the ESC began to publish a growing number of subspecialty journals (Figure 2). In 1999, the *European Journal of Heart Failure* under the editorship of John Cleland was started and received a growing number of manuscripts. Under the leadership of Karl Swedberg since 2004, the now official journal of the Heart Failure Association of the ESC expanded its standing and its impact factor to 2.986. Published since 1967, the ESC took over the scientific journal *Cardiovascular Research* that focuses on basic mechanisms of cardiovascular disease. Other associations including those devoted to echocardiography or prevention and rehabilitation, respectively, later also established their own journals (*European Journal of Echocardiography* and the *European Journal on Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation*).

The latter journal, formerly under the editorship of David Wood and Hugo Saner, recently reached an impact factor of 2.221; its joint editors are now Pantaleo Gianuzzi and Diederick E. Grobee. The European Heart Rhythm Association publishes *EUROPACE* under the editorship of John Camm, a journal that is devoted to electrophysiology and pacing. Finally, the European Council on Cardiovascular Nursing and Allied Professions also established their own journal, with Tiny Jaarsama as the editor of the *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*. Thus, today the ESC Journal Family encompasses seven scientific journals covering the whole spectrum of cardiovascular medicine and its subspecialties. Furthermore, additional publications are linked to the ESC through its associations and working groups. Importantly, the European Association on Percutaneous Coronary Interventions (EAPCI) edits, under the leadership of Patrick Serruys,



Figure 1 Past Editors-in-Chief of *European Heart Journal*. (A) Desmond G. Julian (1980–1988), (B) Henri E. Kulbertus (1989–1994), (C) Kim Fox (1995–2002), and (D) Frans Van de Werf (2003–2008).

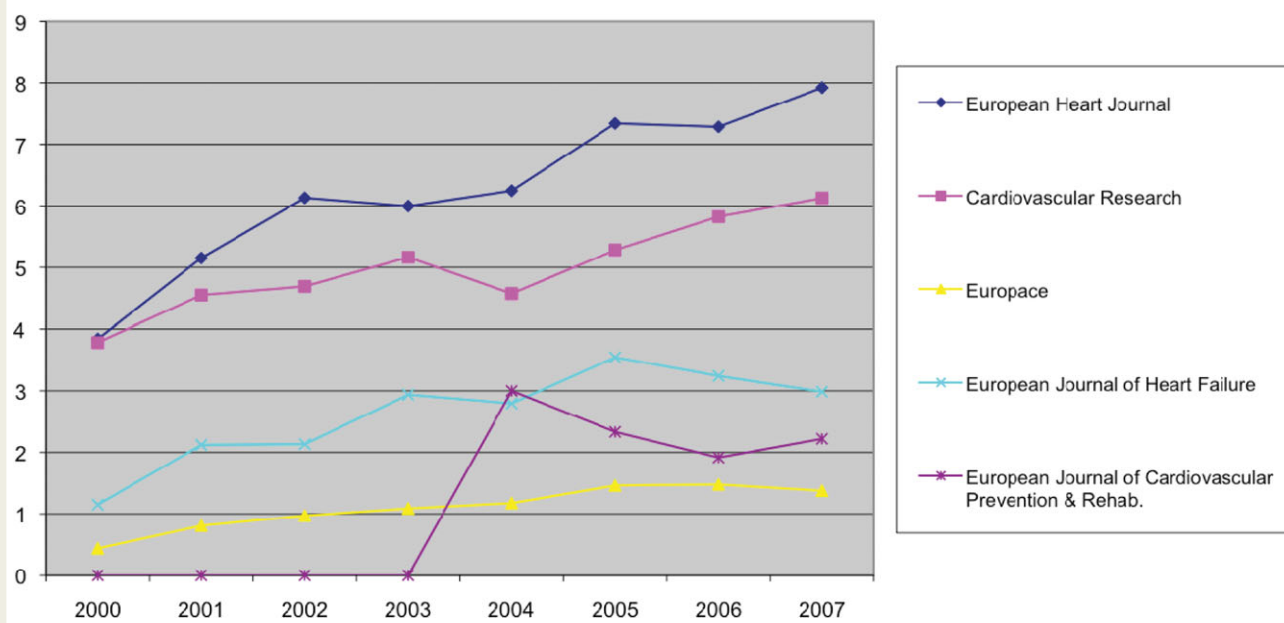


Figure 2 Evolution of the impact factors of the journals of the ESC family over time.

EuroIntervention, a journal concentrating on interventional cardiology. Although not an official journal of the ESC and produced by a different publisher, a close collaboration will be assured here too thanks to Patrick W. Serruys' engagement as a Deputy Editor of the *European Heart Journal*.

Building on strength

The *European Heart Journal* became the flagship of the ESC, a society that has grown impressively over the last two decades, as has their annual congress that each year welcomes more than 26 000 delegates from more than 30 countries. The overwhelming success of the annual congress has contributed importantly to the growth of the *European Heart Journal* as its subscription is linked to the numbers registered at the meeting. The increasing quality of the annual ESC Congress and of its journal have both played a major role in restoring the status of European cardiology internationally to the position that it held prior to the Second World War.

The impressive turn around time to first decision of only 20 days achieved by the last editorial team in Leuven under the leadership of Frans Van de Werf as well as the availability of a *fast track* section contributed to the growing attractiveness of the *European Heart Journal* for manuscript submission. The journal's turn around time compares well with that of other leading cardiovascular journals such as *Circulation*, with times of up to 28 days. Thus, today, almost 30 years after the first issue appeared, the *European Heart Journal* has an impressive record and hence also a bright future.

However, there are weaknesses as well that cannot be ignored. Indeed, like many other journals linked to a major professional society such as *Circulation* (American Heart Association) and the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, its impact factor still depends heavily on guidelines published by these bodies. It will be a challenge, but also the ambition of the new editorial team to make the *European Heart Journal* more attractive in an attempt to obtain more original research papers as well as reviews of the highest scientific quality from both sides of the Atlantic and Asia. Indeed, our goals are simple and while the quality of competitive journals in the USA is well recognized, we believe that the *European Heart Journal* has the potential to attract the best

publications from both sides of the Atlantic. To that end, the new editorial team went far beyond Zurich and invited Josep Brugada, an eminent expert in the field of arrhythmias and one of the discoverers of the Brugada syndrome, as well as Patrick W. Serruys, one of the world leading experts in interventional cardiology, to become Deputy Editors (Figure 3). Furthermore, many leading cardiologists from most European countries such as Paolo Camici, Francesco Cosentino, Filippo Crea, Stephanie Dimmeler, Keith Fox, Petros Nyannopolous, Thomas Münzel, Steffano Taddei, Jens-Uwe Voigt, William Wijns, and others still to be named will serve as Associate Editors.

Expanding globally

However, the new *European Heart Journal* looks far beyond Europe and aims to become even more global than it already is. Indeed, the new editorial team particularly welcomes contributions from US and Canadian authors and hopes to increase North American submissions. Indeed, for the first time in its history, the *European Heart Journal* has appointed a US Deputy Editor. We are happy that Bernhard Gersh from the Mayo Clinic, an experienced clinical cardiologist with a broad research scope, has accepted this important task (3). Furthermore, several US Associate Editors and numerous US members of the Editorial Board are also part of the new editorial team.

We recognize the growing presence of basic and clinical investigators from the Asian-Pacific regions and indeed have asked Hiroaki Shimokawa from Sendai University in Japan, a prominent cardiovascular scientist and clinician, to become the associate editor for Asia. These critically important links to the growing scientific community in Japan, Korea, China, Australasia (with the special help of Henry Krum from Monash University in Melbourne as Associate Editor), India, and other Asian countries are further strengthened by a number of new members of the Editorial Board from this part of the world.

We will foster cardiology worldwide not only by publishing original research, editorials, reviews, and cardiovascular flashlights, but also by a new feature of the *European Heart Journal*, i.e. 'Cardio-Pulse'. This novel feature will be incorporated into each issue at the front and will report on issues of general interest such as personalities, political aspects affecting our profession, historical



Figure 3 The new editors of the *European Heart Journal* (2009–2011): (A) Thomas F. Lüscher (Editor-in-Chief), (B) Jopip Brugada (Deputy Editor, arrhythmias), (C) Ulf Landmesser (Deputy Editor, prevention and basic science), (D) Frank T. Ruschitzka (Deputy Editor, hypertension and heart failure), (E) Patrick W. Serruys (Deputy Editor, interventional cardiology), and (F) Bernhard Gersh (US Deputy Editor).

vignettes, cardiology practice, national healthcare systems, and funding sources in different countries, as well as other subjects. 'CardioPulse' will be global and not restricted to Europe; indeed, we intend to cover particularly topics relevant to India, China, and Eastern Europe, as well as the Middle East and other growing scientific communities. We are proud to announce that with Andros Tofield we were able to attract an experienced physician with a record in medical writing who is highly motivated to provide, with the help of a large team of medical writers, interesting features for the readers of the *European Heart Journal*.

Threats in a global world

The growing cardiovascular community and the corresponding increase in clinical and translational research provides opportunities, but also challenges. Indeed, the expansion of the leading cardiovascular journals with a growing network of a number of subspecialty products may attract even more papers to these publications. The competitive advantage of such journal networks is their close interaction via electronic internet platforms, allowing for editorial decisions beyond the main journal. Indeed, papers worthy of publication that just do not fit the criteria required to be accepted in the main journal may still be of interest for a subspecialty journal. Within such a network, an editorial decision 'acceptable upon revision to

the subspecialty journal on . . . ' may be of interest to submitting authors as it allows for rapid publication with no change in format and based on the existing reviews of the main journal. Nonetheless, we face the threat of information overload and indeed from multiple sources—our challenge will be to position the *European Heart Journal* at the forefront of what is clinically and scientifically relevant to the practice of cardiovascular medicine.

The ESC Journal Family is well positioned to respond to a changing world. In fact, many subspecialty journals already exist within the ESC Journal Family (see above; *Figure 4*) and—in contrast to those published by the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology—most of them already have formidable impact factors. It is with great pleasure, therefore, that we are able to announce that all editors of the ESC Journal Family will join the new Editorial Board of the *European Heart Journal* as Associate Editors. As of January 2009, therefore, the Editors of the *European Heart Journal* will be closely linked with Karl Swedberg, Editor of *European Journal of Heart Failure*, Michael Piper, Editor of *Cardiovascular Research*, Jos Roelandt, Editor of the *European Journal of Echocardiography*, John Camm, Editor of *EUROPACE*, Pantaleo Gianuzzi and Diederick E. Grobee, new Editors of the *Journal on Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation*, and Tiny Jaarsma, Editor of the *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*. Manuscripts that will appear more suitable for a ESC subspecialty journal will be



Figure 4 The ESC Journal Family. All subspecialty journals are official ESC journals except *EuroIntervention* which is endorsed by the ESC only and is the official journal of the EAPCI.

Table 1 New features of the *European Heart Journal* 2009–2011

Feature	Content
US Deputy Editor	Bernard J. Gersh
Associate Editor Asia	Hiroaki Shimokawa
Editors, basic science	Ulf Landmesser (Deputy Editor), Stephanie Dimeler, Christian Matter, Felix C. Tanner (Associate Editors)
ESC subspecialty journal editors	All Editors of ESC Journal Family will act as Associate Editors
ESC Journal Family	Network of existing ESC journals with editorial exchange of manuscripts and joint decisions (see <i>Figure 4</i>)
CardioPulse	Reports on personalities, history, healthcare systems, politics, and funding sources, among others
Illustrated editorials	Editorials with designer-drawn figures
Invited reviews	State-of-the-art articles by key opinion leaders around the world
Clinical 'Fast Track'	Highly interesting and important clinical science with a time to first decision of 5 days
Basic 'Fast Track'	Highly interesting and important basic science with clinical relevance with a time to first decision of 5 days

handled directly by the ESC subspecialty journal editors at the time of decision. If they agree with a decision 'acceptable for the subspecialty journal... with revision' the authors will be informed accordingly and will be able to submit the revised manuscript directly to the ESC subspecialty journal based on the reviews of the *European Heart Journal*, with possible acceptance.

The future is bright...

In spite of all the challenges that the new editorial team will face, the future is bright: indeed, the cardiovascular community continues to grow; innovation has been an impressive feature of cardiovascular medicine over the last decades and is likely to remain so. The same applies to the dissemination of knowledge, and the *European Heart Journal* is well positioned to expand its recognition and readership within Europe and beyond. In this respect, there are a number of new developments that will enrich the journal, such as 'CardioPulse', but also invited reviews

authored by key opinion leaders and illustrated by a professional designer (*Table 1*). Furthermore, we will welcome basic science articles and reviews relevant to clinical practice. To that end, we invited clinicians engaged in basic research as well as basic scientists interested in clinical medicine to join our team. Ulf Landmesser, an interventional cardiologist with a strong record in stem cell research and prevention, will cover this area as a Deputy Editor. Further, we are proud to announce that Stephanie Dimmeler, a world expert on stem cell biology, will act as an Associate Editor of the *European Heart Journal*. She will be assisted by Associate Editors interested in basic research from the Zurich team such as Christian Matter and Felix C. Tanner. We aim to attract more basic science relevant to clinical cardiology by the creation of a 'fast track basic science' section and by welcoming studies and reviews on basic mechanisms of cardiovascular disease. 'Yes, we can!'—with the help of a great team as well as the readers and authors around the world.