



Reflections of the JEADV editor

Scientific publishing in Europe

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As European dermatologist I feel honoured to be invited to contribute to the anniversary issue of the Netherlands Journal of Dermatology and Venereology; my most cordial congratulations to your 30th birthday!

The Netherlands have played an important role in European dermatology, mainly through the foundation of the European Society for Dermatological Research (ESDR) which organized their meetings over 18 years in Holland, mostly the beautiful city of Amsterdam. This was extremely helpful in order to give a structural skeleton to concentrate on scientific quality and not fall into the temptation of a traveling society. Dutch dermatologists – like Rudi Cormane – are still honoured by special memorial lectureships in these congresses. Also the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) has met in the Netherlands several times.

THE JOURNAL JEADV

The journal JEADV is now in its 34th year and has grown in quantity and – hopefully – in quality over the years. Here I will briefly comment on some aspects of scientific publishing in our field.

NUMBER OF MANUSCRIPTS

While 15 years ago we still had 6 issues per year and probably 700 new manuscript submissions, this number has raised to over 3500 in 2019; in 2020 we probably will have received more than 4500 new manuscript submissions. These manuscripts come from all over the world, only one third comes from Europe; among the top twenty countries submitting manuscripts 10 are from outside Europe. At this occasion it should be mentioned that the Netherlands always contribute considerably ranking between number 8 and number 15 of submitting countries over the years. Similar to the world-wide distribution of submitting countries, also within the top 10 downloading countries 5 of them are from outside Europe, more than 25 % from USA and China. This shows that the articles are read all over the world.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATION

There is the problem of a European identity for this journal. Indeed I often here critical remarks that the editor should focus more on European articles and not so much publish



Johannes Ring: "The most unpleasant part of the work of an editor is having to reject so many good papers."

manuscripts from Asia or America.

This is a critical issue which has to be answered absolutely clear: there will be no bonus for manuscripts from Europe; the only guide for the decision to accept or reject is the quality! We also have discussed the possibility of founding a new journal for international manuscripts sent to Europe. But we decided against. If manuscripts are excellent they can be accepted in the 'normal' JEADV and don't have to be put into a second journal.

TOPICALITY

A second problem in editing is topicality: should a journal prefer certain topics which are very much en vogue or try to produce 'theme' issues? My answer is 'no' for originals; here again only quality is the parameter. For review articles, indeed, it may be true that one tries to find a good review to

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Rank	Author(s)	Article Title	Volume	Issue	No. of Accesses
1	Wollenberg, A. et al.	Consensus-based European guidelines for treatment of atopic eczema (atopic dermatitis) in adults and children: part I	32	5	17,606
2	Kanti, V. et al.	Evidence-based (S3) guideline for the treatment of androgenetic alopecia in women and in men – short version	32	1	13,483
3	Wollenberg, A. et al.	Consensus-based European guidelines for treatment of atopic eczema (atopic dermatitis) in adults and children: part II	32	6	13,007
4	Dréno, B. et al.	Cutibacterium acnes (Propionibacterium acnes) and acne vulgaris: a brief look at the latest updates	32	S2	9,830
5	Adamič, M. et al.	Guidelines of care for vascular lasers and intense pulse light sources from the European Society for Laser Dermatology	29	9	6,331
6	Nast, A. et al.	European evidence-based (S3) guideline for the treatment of acne – update 2016 – short version	30	8	5,798
7	Dréno, B.	What is new in the pathophysiology of acne, an overview	31	S5	5,708
8	Gamoudi, D. et al.	2018 European guideline on the organization of a consultation for sexually transmitted infections	33	8	5,232
9	Ring, J. et al.	Guidelines for treatment of atopic eczema (atopic dermatitis) Part I	26	8	5,050
10	Salavastru, C. et al.	European guideline for the management of scabies	31	8	4,893

Table 1. Top ten articles downloaded in 2019 from JEADV.

a very 'hot topic' or has to reject the fifth review to the same topic within two years. Also the editor has to control his feelings: there is no bonus for articles of his own field or even his own group. It made me really free, when I had to reject one of my favourite papers of one of my best pupils, because the review comments were just not excellent enough. 2020 was the year of the Corona pandemic. Since the first manuscript on cutaneous manifestations in Covid-19 by Dr. Recalcati from Lecco, Lago di Como in the beginning of March 2020 a flood of manuscripts has arrived showing that dermatology is implicated at various levels in this infectious disease not only with the infected patients [1] but also regarding the risk of patients with skin diseases, patients taking certain drugs to develop Covid-19 as well as risk of medical health personal to develop skin diseases. [2] Thankfully our publisher Wiley has decided quickly to publish all Covid-19 related articles as open access for free.

IMPACT

The essence of a journal is to be read, to reach people of your target group. This can be measured by several ways; citations or nowadays downloads have become the most important

parameter (figure 1); indeed over the last years articles in JEADV have shown as steep increase in downloads meaning that they obviously find some interest.

The impact factor – the ratio of number of citations in peer-reviewed journals divided by number of published items – has become the gold standard in evaluating the quality of a journal. However there may be other aspects of impact and other ways to measure as for instance the Altmetric Score which also comprises mentions in newspapers, television, social media and government communications.

For JEADV the impact factor has raised from 2,8 some years ago to 5,2 in 2019. We are ranking now No. 5 among 66 peer-reviewed international dermatology journals.

PREDATORY JOURNALS

The pressure on young researchers is increasing to publish as many internationally accepted articles in a minimum of time. This has led to the development of so-called predatory journals. These are journals publishing every manuscript they get in open access against a certain fee (€ 2000 – 3000), most likely without adequate peer review process. [3] This seems to be a billion dollar business when you think that an estimated

JEADV: 2015 - 2019 article downloads

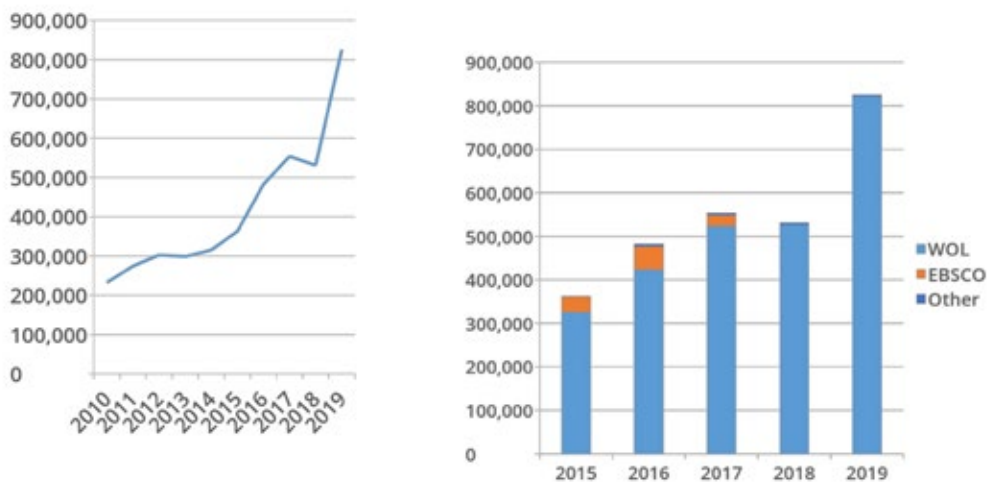


Figure 1. Article downloads from JEADV over the last years in Wiley library and others.

10.000 such journals are around. Some people have compared this to the cocaine business. The analogy is interesting: cocaine dealers make the money from the addiction of poor people, predatory journals make the money from the ambition of young researchers. [4] Among the most accessed articles in 2019 the top ten comprised mostly European guidelines but also interesting review articles, interestingly also from supplement issues (table 1).

THE DECISION PROCESS

To select the best articles out of more than 4000 submitted manuscripts is a huge task. [5] This is only possible with the help of very dedicated associate editors Lidia Rudnicka (Wasaw) and Franco Rongioletti (Cagliari) as well as enthusiastic section editors for certain fields of our specialty

- and the superb work of our editorial office in Lugano with Asao Sarukawa and co-workers. The greatest difficulty is to find good reviewers. In the average we have to write to 10 experts in order to finally get 2 reviews. So it helps when the editor knows some people around the world.

The task of a good reviewer is to answer the following major questions:

- Is it new ?
- Is it true ?
- Is it understandable ?
- Are the conclusions justified ?
- What is missing ?

Thank god we are lucky to find a lot of good reviewers; in 2020 we had to use the help of more than 4000 experts to come to decisions on the manuscripts.

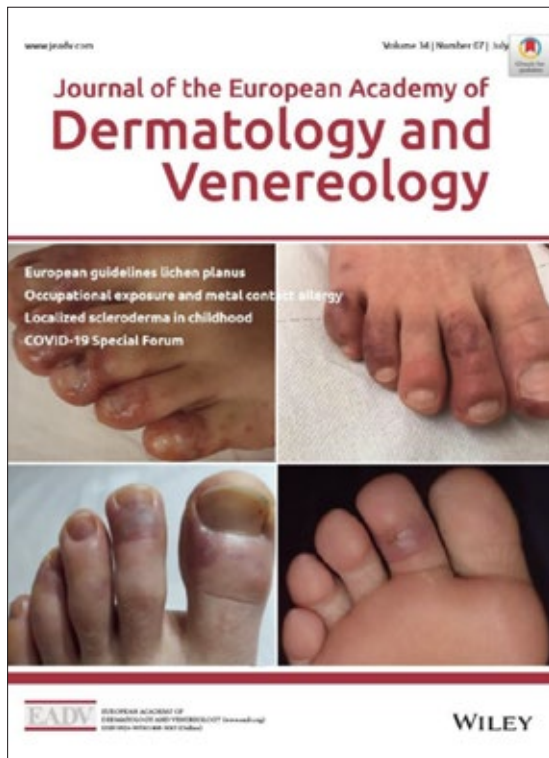


Figure 2. Cover picture of JEADV from June 2020.

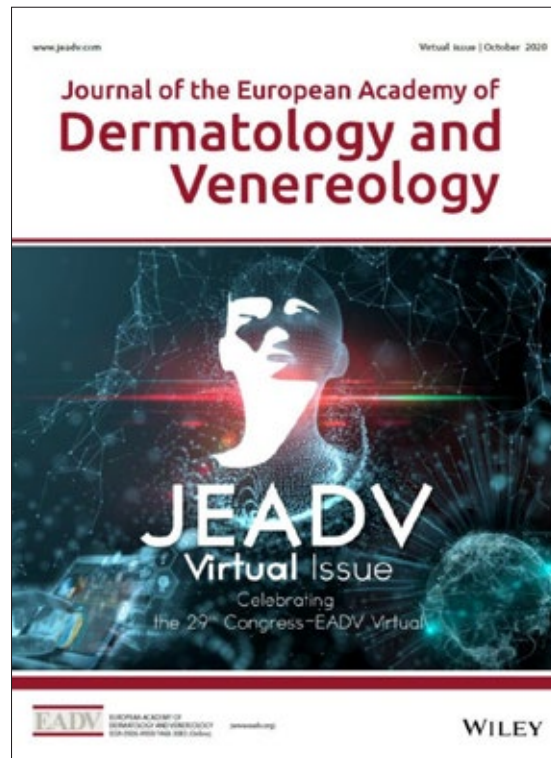


Figure 3. Cover picture of the first virtual issue of JEADV on the occasion of the first virtual congress in October 2020.

Bad reviewers

- Don't give an opinion.
- Look at the manuscripts only superficially.
- Hide conflicts of interest.
- Take ideas from the papers reviewed for the own research.
- Accept bad papers from friends.
- Do not tell the editor about possible suspicion of misconduct.

The most unpleasant part of the work of an editor is having to reject so many good papers. Therefore, in my letters I try to be positive and motivate the authors not to give up. As a fact we made an analysis of over 2500 rejected papers in 2018: Over 400 found their way into good peer-reviewed other international journals, 5 of them even into journals with an higher impact factor than JEADV. Overall we conclude that our selection process is not so bad.

SCIENTIFIC MISCONDUCT

Unfortunately in this immense and increasing pressure for publications scientific misconduct also has increased. Apart from scientific fraud like faking ('forging'), polishing ('trimming') or targeted selection ('cooking') also plagiarism plays a role. Among scientific misconduct in good faith failures in statistics, wrong use of controls, exclusion of extreme values have to be mentioned, but cannot be excused. Plagiarism also includes double publications of the same or very similar data submitted to 2 different journals. In our journal we regularly have cases of scientific misconduct – fortunately very rare – where the COPE mechanism (committee of publication ethics) is applied. Interestingly

among cases I know personally quite often the use of wrong or polished pictures, wrong controls and false legends were the culprits. Also the photographic lie play a role using different light sources in comparing clinical lesions before and after.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Dermatology is a visual specialty; therefore pictures are very important. Clinical pictures should contain no unnecessary things (like tapes, textiles, furniture in the background etc). They should be informative. Diagrams should be understandable and have a visual impact; they should tell a story. Every picture has to be self-explanatory with the adequate legend. Our journal JEADV is happy that our medical illustrator Laurence Zulianello is helping with beautiful diagrams and preparing the cover pictures every month on the front of our journal (figures 2 and 3).

EDITING

The editor's task comprises the selection of manuscripts guaranteeing for a fair review process, organizing the procedures and the team play. One has to be open for complaints and strictly stick to confidentiality. Nobody will know the name of a reviewer, not my best friend nor a billionaire sponsor! This is like the confessional secret in the catholic church. Otherwise the peer-review system will not work. Finally the editor should have a contagious enthusiasm for the work and the journal! For me as editor the maximal catastrophe to occur would be that I would accept a fake article which would have to

be withdrawn later. This has happened to very renowned journals like Nature and Science. Only the second worst catastrophe would be to miss a possible Nobel prize article. This has happened many times before.

CONCLUSIONS

It would make sense to lower the pressure on young researchers through objective institutions and some 'wise' mentorship. Good scientific practice has to be explained and taught again and again. Finally the ultimate goal of making a journal is not to get the highest impact factor but to create an informative platform and an attractive journal which will be read by the target group that is the clinical dermatologists.

LITERATURE

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Summary

With increasing international connectivity and information exchange scientific publishing has become a central pillar of academic activity. On the basis of new research findings and clinical expertise the publishing of scientific manuscripts is a multifaceted procedure. With the experience of some years as editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology* (JEADV) some principal problems of scientific publishing will be discussed from author's view via the review process and editing up to ranking of journals. While the impact factor – the ratio of number of citations divided by number of published items in a certain time period - is regarded as gold standard, it should be kept in mind that journals are made for the target audience: this means in our case for practicing dermatologists and they should be attracted to read.

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