Our impact factor of 5.31: why it increased and what it means to readers and authors

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Our 2008 impact factor has been recently announced as being as high as 5.31, making *Acta Neuropathologica* number 4 among 68 pathology journals. A variety of reasons may account for this considerable increase over last year's impact factor. It is my strong feeling that good service to authors leading to more high quality submissions has been most relevant. We do not charge for printed pages and color figures. The mean time from submission to first decision is currently at 14 days, the mean time from acceptance to online publication at 11 days, and the mean time from online to print publication at 63 days. In fact, we have recently published a paper on *IDH1* mutations in gliomas (*Acta Neuropathol* 116:597–602, 2008) where the time from submission to appearance in PubMed has been as low as 8 days (!), including reviews, author revisions, editorial handling and production by the publisher. The members of the editorial board and our external referees provide not only fast, but also fair and constructive comments. These features document how referees, editorial team and publisher work hand in hand in order to satisfy authors and readers.

Type and subject of papers have also been responsible for the high impact factor. We have published several review papers receiving wide interest and a few “clusters” of related papers on hot topics, such as frontotemporal lobar degeneration and TDP-43. However, our impact factor cannot be solely explained by a few highly cited papers. Thus, only 12 of 255 (4.7%) papers published in 2006 and 2007 have not received a single citation so far, clearly reflecting the relatively homogeneous and high

quality of published manuscripts in general. Finally, the journal is well accessible, with 5,377 institutions around the world currently having full-text access. In conclusion, I am convinced that it is the hard work and the dedication of the editorial board, our referees and the publisher which has resulted in this bibliometric boost.

Our aim is not to push the impact factor as high as possible, and we certainly do not take the impact factor game too serious. Given the well-known and broadly discussed limitations, ambiguities, pseudoexactnesses and mysteries surrounding the impact factor, we do not over-interpret its absolute value and our ranking. Although case reports decrease the impact factor, we consider them as integral part of neuropathology and continue to publish them, but only those providing substantially new insight and ideally a better understanding of pathogenesis of disease. We also like to publish original papers outside of the mainstream where high citation rates cannot be expected, provided they are well written and include new and interesting data. On the other hand, the range of the impact factor is a useful measure of the interest provoked by our papers, it is one feature (among several others) correlated with journal quality, and—aside from whether we like it or not—we simply cannot ignore it, given that this figure is usually a consideration where to submit a paper. An increasing impact factor implicates a higher probability of attracting the best papers in the future. Irrespective of any bibliometry, we will continue to do our best to provide authors and readers with the best service possible, and we trust that good citation rates will ensue.

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