A changing of the guard

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It was a singular honour to be invited, late in 2007, to “take over the reins” from Professor Pietro di Prampero as Editor-in-Chief of the *European Journal of Applied Physiology*. I am keenly aware of the legacy that I have inherited. Even those of us who are “seasoned” Editors may have only a somewhat superficial sense of the extent of the work that Pietro so unstintingly performed for *EJAP*. Without this, we would not see the journal being as well placed in the international “applied physiology” arena as it now is.

The “onus” to which Pietro refers in his preceding Editorial carries a set of inter-related challenges: How can we promote the publication of high-quality and front-line integrative and translational research in *EJAP*? And what steps can we take to encourage more investigators to view *EJAP* as the journal-of-choice for their submissions? We are already taking steps to address these questions.

1. Promotion of integrative and translational physiology

The “integrative” philosophy that underpins *EJAP* (di Prampero 1999) is one that perhaps, in now largely being taken for granted, demands revisiting. The classical systemic-based view of physiology has been suffering from a crisis of identity for several decades with the ascendancy of the reductionist approaches fostered by many investigating cellular and molecular-biological levels of physiological organisation. Interestingly, this trend has started to reverse with the emergence of genomics research and the recognition that its translation requires an appropriate systemic frame of reference (viz. “systems biology”). We are keen therefore to promote not only experimental studies, but also “in silico” modelling and simulation approaches, whose scope has been empowered by genomics- and proteomics-driven

developments in computational biology (e.g. Crampin et al. 2004).

We are therefore embarking on a series of initiatives designed to position *EJAP* towards the forefront of applied physiology journals. For example, a new series of thematic Special Issues and Reviews is being developed to address what we see as contemporary integrative and translational issues in human applied physiology, with contributions from acknowledged leaders that span the levels of systemic organisation; e.g. fatigue on exertion in health and disease, and processes of adaptation and acclimation to environmental stressors. To promote this venture, *EJAP* appointed Professor Dag Linnarsson as its first Reviews Editor late last year. Regrettably, however, his other commitments have precluded him from continuing in this position. I am pleased to report that Professor Nigel Taylor has recently agreed to take on this position.

2. Promoting *EJAP* as a “journal of choice”. Our ISI-generated impact factor continues on a rising trajectory, currently being 1.752, compared to 1.601 a year ago (i.e. a 9.4% increase). However, *EJAP* coexists with competitor journals having impact factors and citation statistics which *EJAP* has not yet been able to approach. While such metrical indices have their shortcomings, they nonetheless are assuming progressively greater significance for the career prospects of younger scientists. I therefore believe that *EJAP* has an obligation to address this shortfall. One might reasonably argue that primary in this regard is the quality of our published manuscripts, which requires not only high-quality submissions but also high-quality peer review.

The latter is receiving considerable impetus/attention through new strategic appointments to both our cadre of Editors and the Advisory Board. In the last year, several of our long-standing Editors retired: Professors Victor Candas, Norman Heglund, Carlo Porro, Franco Saibene,

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Anthony Sargeant and Gisela Sjogaard. We remain indebted to their long-standing service and leadership to *EJAP*. And sadly, we have to report the recent passing of Professor Saibene (Cerretelli et al. 2008). However, we have been fortunate to attract several new Editors in their place: Professors Fausto Baldissera (biomechanics and motor control), George Havenith (environmental physiology and ergonomics), Håkan Westerblad (skeletal muscle) and Klaas Westerterp (metabolism and energetics).

We also continue to strengthen the Advisory Board, which serves as an important interface between the journal's body of Reviewers and the Editors, both because of the particular expertise of its members and their commitment, and thus is a seeding ground for new editors. While nominations to the Board typically come from the Editors, we also welcome unsolicited nominations. If you have an interest in joining the Board, you are most welcome to contact me to discuss this informally (at ejap@dsl.pipex.com). A good time to do this is early in the calendar year, as this gives us adequate time to prepare a submission dossier for consideration at our annual Editors Meeting in May. I would also encourage our younger colleagues to put themselves forward as Reviewers. This can be done at any time of the year.

3. The *EJAP* "experience" We are striving to ensure that not only is this professional and efficient, but also sufficiently flexible to accommodate the particular needs of individual contributors and reviewers. As most of you will know, we moved from Manuscript Central to Editorial Manager late last year, a transition that in the short-term continues to present us with some challenges as we become familiar with its operating characteristics. I have been working closely with Professor di Prampero and the Udine office (headed most ably by Maria di Prampero) to ensure a relatively seamless transition by processing expeditiously the remaining submissions to Manuscript Central, and also with our cadre of Editors to get to grips with the logistics of the new system. In this, we have been ably assisted by our colleagues at Springer Verlag, in particular Ms Ingrid Fischer and our editorial assistant: first Ms Eloisa Bernabe and, more recently, Mr Reymund Argus. The move to Editorial Manager provides us with the means to streamline the

entire processing sequence for manuscripts, with the simple goal of providing authors with a timely and constructive decision on their submissions. Nonetheless, we have had some teething problems. To those of you, whether authors or reviewers, who have been on the receiving end of these, I offer you an unreserved apology. We aim to do better!

We also feel that it is important that you, our readers, have a voice. We want to hear your opinions about how we are doing and what we could do better for you. I have, for example, been approached by authors about the possibility of introducing a debate-driven forum. We also have a vibrant *Letters to the Editor* section, to which I encourage you to contribute, not only to comment on specific publications, but also to raise broader issues pertinent to the Journal's remit.

We are also taking advantage of Springer's pilot blog scheme, and will shortly be launching an experimental *EJAP* blog at <http://blogs.springer.com/ejap/>. I encourage you to use this as a less formal and more immediate forum for discussion and debate.

In conclusion, addressing these various factors is, I believe, an important element in promoting a state change in the quality of submitted manuscripts. *EJAP* has to be seen to provide a convincing "home" for authors, where we become the first choice rather than the third or fourth choice. I would like to thank you all for your continuing commitment to *EJAP* and I look forward to sharing with you all—readers, contributors, members of the Advisory Board, Editors and our colleagues at Springer Verlag—an exciting "next stage" for the journal.

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