“A Changing of the Guard” revisited

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In assuming the mantle of Pietro di Prampero as Editor-in-Chief of the *European Journal of Applied Physiology* in 2007, I threw down a multi-faceted gage: “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?” (Ward 2009). As *EJAP* welcomes its new joint Editors-in-Chief, Håkan Westerblad and Klaas Westerterp, it is an appropriate juncture to consider how well we have risen to these challenges during my tenure as Editor-in-Chief.

1. Promotion of integrative and translational physiology

A long-standing and central tenet for *EJAP* has been its commitment to integrative physiology across a range of applied contexts. We have been able to progress this through the series of initiatives upon which we embarked to better “position” *EJAP* in the international applied physiology arena.

For example, impetus has been injected by the Reviews Editor, Nigel Taylor, through his commissioning of reviews from “leaders in the field” both on an individual basis and also as thematic review clusters (a new venture for *EJAP*) in areas such as blood pressure regulation, space physiology and physiological employment standards, and which are now in the publication “pipeline”. We have continued in the tradition of publishing selected papers from major international conferences as Special Issues and Special Issue Clusters: “Environmental Ergonomics” in

2008, edited by Igor Mekjavic, Nigel Taylor and Pietro di Prampero (12th International Conference on Environmental Ergonomics: Piran, Slovenia, 2007); “Physiology and Pharmacology of Temperature Regulation” in 2010, edited by Tatsuo Watanabe, George Havenith and Nigel Taylor (3rd International Symposium on Physiology and Pharmacology of Temperature Regulation: Matsue, Japan, 2009); and “Electrical Stimulation for Neuromuscular Testing and Training” in 2011, edited by Roberto Bottinelli (XVIII Congress of the International Society of Electrophysiology and Kinesiology: Aalborg, Denmark, 2010).

We have furthered translational applied physiology through selective appointments of both Editors and Advisory Editors. This has been reflected in a growing number of submissions having a clinical context: for example, studies addressing exercise-based interventions in patient populations such as metabolic syndrome, obesity, diabetes, muscle disease, cancer, heart and lung disease, and spinal cord injury. We have also seen a significant number of submissions in the areas of genomics, proteomics and metabolomics. However, systems biology (Greenhaff and Hargreaves 2011) and “in silico” modelling and simulation remain “emerging” areas for the journal.

2. *Promoting EJAP as a “journal of choice”* The journal’s ISI-generated impact factor continues on a rising trajectory, increasing from 1.601 in 2006 to 2.147 in 2011 (a 34 % increase). But this should not lead to complacency, as our competitor journals have generally enjoyed rather similar proportional gains. Nonetheless, *EJAP* is clearly becoming more attractive, as evidenced by the striking increase (almost a doubling) in the number of submitted manuscripts: from 722 in 2006–2007 to 1,324 in 2011–2012. And, despite the journal’s heritage, we are now in a position where non-European submissions are dominant (59 % in 2012).

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We have made considerable improvements in manuscript processing, with the time to first decision falling from 52 to 29 days. The acceptance rate has decreased from 0.45 to 0.35, with further decreases to 0.20 or less in the final 3 months of 2012. This is a reflection of our commitment to accept submissions of only the highest quality. We have also adopted a “triage” system of preliminary editorial review where there are concerns regarding scientific quality or scope, facilitating both a rapid response to authors and reduced pressure on the peer review process.

Central to these developments is the substantive change that the journal’s cadre of Editors has undergone. The combination of targeted replacements and new positions has ensured that the key subject areas are well represented by internationally recognised scientists worldwide.

3. *The EJAP “experience”* We have striven to ensure that this is both professional and efficient, while also being sufficiently flexible to accommodate the particular needs of individual authors and reviewers. In this, we have been most ably assisted by our colleagues at Springer Verlag, in particular Dr. Beatrice Menz, Ms. Ingrid Fischer and our series of able editorial assistants. Also, we have endeavoured to make the journal’s operations more transparent.

For example, while nominations for Advisory Editors and Referees historically have come from the Editors, we felt it important that unsolicited nominations from interested individuals be encouraged. We have received a heartening number of expressions of interest—a trend that I hope will continue. Finally, we have encouraged exchanges through Editorials, Clusters (e.g. hypoxic training and blood doping) and Letters to the Editor as means of promoting debate and comment.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the entire *EJAP* “family”: authors, referees, editors, our administrative support network and not the least—our readership. I am confident that, under the leadership of Håkan Westerblad and Klaas Westerterp, the future of the journal will be ensured.

References

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