

## Nuclear medicine, scientific publishing and the era of cost containment

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Dear readers,

In the course of 2011, economic problems across Europe, with a declining euro and general government austerity measures, have continued to impact health care budgets and programmes. Health care systems are today confronted with continuing reductions in funding while being under societal pressure to maintain high-quality patient care. At the same time, the incidence of cancer, cardiovascular diseases and chronic illnesses rises with the progressive ageing of the population, and the coming decades will see increases in the number of elderly people and patients needing care. With the current restrictions, many treatments for older persons with chronic illness have been questioned due to their cost and potential benefit. Current screening programmes such as those for colon and breast cancer are under discussion (1). Central in this debate is how technologies are employed and whether testing with modern imaging modalities is sometimes “unnecessary”.

How can we provide high-quality nuclear medicine care, improve treatment options and outcomes for patients with prevalent diseases, and do so within a socially responsible, cost-effective, and sustainable framework?. The challenge for members of our profession is to re-evaluate existing practices, commit to understanding the evidence upon which diagnostic options should be based, and reduce costs as much as possible to help in delivering better care with lower global expenditure. If we do not lead the way in this regard, advocate appropriate use of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging in clinical practice, and show that we are

able to eliminate unnecessary spending, we will soon find that others will do it for us.

In this era of cost containment, scientific journals such as the *European Journal of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging* (EJNMMI) have a key role in disseminating knowledge on optimization of procedures and promotion of best practice. Such activities should support responsible knowledge-based health care decisions that might reduce cost while maintaining high-quality patient care.

The EJNMMI continued to develop in 2011. Over the year, the articles we have published include 27 Editorials, 190 Original Articles, 15 Review Articles, 21 Images of the Month, 18 Letters to the Editor, 12 Guidelines and 7 Book Reviews. In all issues, invited editorial commentaries written by expert leaders have emphasized special papers, bringing opinion and putting them into perspective. As new PET isotopes and tracers for diagnosis and therapy emerge, a supplement on Matched Radionuclide Pairs for Imaging and Therapy was edited by Prof. Andreas Bockisch and published in August this year (2).

Innovation and developments in the field are well reflected in the published Original Articles, which have reported much of the best clinical and basic research performed this year in the field of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging on a global scale. The Review Articles, edited by Prof. Gianni Lucignani, have addressed relevant and timely topics in the field. Prof. Luc Mortelmans has selected the Images of the Month, delivering the most demonstrative information in just one picture or panel accompanied by a concise description and supported by a small selection of references. The published Guidelines have presented the work of the EANM committees and expert bodies and have described appropriate procedures and best practice in the field. Once again, the Editorial Office, Associate Editors and Editorial Board have been

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committed to delivering to the journal's readers the most innovative and relevant contributions to the field of nuclear medicine and molecular imaging.

The good health of the field is shown by the ever increasing number of articles submitted to the EJNMMI, with close to 1,200 submissions in 2011. As space in the journal remains limited, the acceptance rate in EJNMMI has stayed at 19% for Original Articles. The new companion journal, *EJNMMI Research*, brings additional opportunities for publication of articles on clinical and basic research, in particular to those with a technical or basic science focus. The Editor in Chief of *EJNMMI Research*, Prof. Bischof Delaloye, welcomes submissions at [www.ejnmmires.com](http://www.ejnmmires.com).

Editorial decisions are always taken after thoughtful and detailed peer review, including evaluation of the relevance and priority of the manuscripts. The increasing number of submissions requires that sometimes an immediate decision to reject a paper is taken at the Editorial Office, in particular when the subject of the article is outside the scope of the journal or the paper is judged by the editors to be more appropriate for a different journal. This decision, which inevitably disappoints the authors, is taken to save time and to allow authors maximum opportunity and flexibility to consider other options for publication. In 2011, over 2,700 experts were invited to provide peer reviews for EJNMMI. The reviewer selection process is based on the key words provided by the authors and on the identification of authors who have themselves published, and have expertise, on the subject of the manuscript under consideration. I wish to express my gratitude to all those who have participated in the review process, as the quality of the published articles crucially depends on the ability of the peer reviewers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the research and to help the authors to further improve and strengthen their manuscripts. In the name of the Editorial Board, authors and readers, my sincere thanks go to them all.

As in previous years, the journal's performance can be illustrated by the following figures: The average time from submission to first decision in 2011 has been 24 days; the average time from submission to final acceptance has been 64 days (including revision, re-submission and re-evaluation); and that from submission to rejection has been 24 days. EJNMMI indices in 2011 continue to indicate that the journal is advancing. The 2010 impact factor rose to 5.036 despite the high number of published articles (2,266 citations of 450 articles, with 14% of self-citations). Our immediacy index (citations of articles published in the same year) rose to 1.285, the highest ever and one of the highest in the field, reflecting improved visibility and a more convenient online access to the EJNMMI articles. The cited half-life (number of publication years from the

current year which account for 50% of current citations) is 5.7 years and the total number of citations in 2010 increased to 9,738 (the Thompson Institute for Scientific Information's *Journal Citation Reports*).

The 2011 EJNMMI awards, given to acknowledge excellence in published clinical and basic research, were presented at the closing ceremony of the EANM congress in Birmingham. An article by Giovacchini et al. (3) from Milan on the predictive factors of [C-11] choline PET/CT in patients with biochemical failure after radical prostatectomy was adjudged the best clinical paper in 2010. The article shows that in addition to PSA levels, pathological stage, previous biochemical failure and age should be considered when referring prostate cancer patients for choline PET/CT. The award for best basic science paper in 2010 went to an article on a HER2-binding Affibody molecule labelled with Ga-68 for PET imaging, describing direct in vivo comparison with the In-111-labelled analogue. This paper, by Tolmachev et al. (4) from Uppsala, reports high-contrast imaging within 2 h after injection, making this a promising candidate for molecular imaging of HER2 expression. The award for most cited EJNMMI paper in 2010 (from articles published in 2007 and mostly cited between 2008 and 2010) was given jointly to Dijkgraaf et al. from Maastricht (5) for an article evaluating improved targeting of the alpha(v) beta(3) integrin by multimerisation of RGD peptides, and to Cai et al. from Wisconsin (6) for an article reporting on quantitative PET of EGFR expression in xenograft-bearing mice using Cu-64-labeled cetuximab, a chimeric anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody.

The annual EANM congress in Birmingham yielded many more examples of cutting-edge research that in many instances may result in full scientific articles appearing soon in the scientific literature. The young investigator meetings were particularly lively, demonstrating that there is new talent emerging to ensure the continuity and success of the field. Many of the abstracts that were presented herald exciting papers soon to be published in the EJNMMI and other journals. I strongly encourage young authors to write their papers and submit them to high-ranking journals. I recommend them to carefully read the reviewers' comments and to respect the editorial decisions. If a revised version is requested, they should improve the article in all the ways suggested by the referees in order that it may finally deserve publication. The annual highlight lecture was given by three young investigators who will soon write a manuscript summarizing the congress which will be published in EJNMMI early next year. On the other hand, all activities at the annual congress in Birmingham were organized under current cost-containment criteria, but all participants could sense that the field is ready to deliver

the necessary innovation in research and clinical practice to get through this period of economic uncertainty.

At the end of the year, I always like to express my gratitude to those people who dedicate their time and professional expertise to the success of the journal: Carmina Jimenez, my editorial assistant, who handles the flow of manuscripts and correspondence in the system (29,000 letters generated in 2010!); David Roseveare, who takes care of a most efficient production process; Claudia Schiffers, who carefully tends the journal's website and online system; and Sabine Ben Ghechir, who coordinates Springer's office in Heidelberg. Dear colleagues and readers, I hope that the *European Journal of Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging* will continue to make good progress next year, and wish you all a very successful 2012!

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EJNMMI Editor-in-Chief

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