Steeper steps and pledge for inevitable responsibilities

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Similar to that in the past, there have been biannual changes in the editorial board. The new editorial team consists of 27 editorial members (editor-in-chief, deputy editor-in-chief, and associate editors), and they have been handling the editorial office for the Journal of Gastroenterology (JG) since June 2019. While there are 12 new editorial staff members, some of the senior members have terminated their association with the journal office, including Professor Ando who had served as editor-in-chief for 6 years. The former editorial team led by Prof. Ando was a great legacy for the JG. They established a strong and positive image of the journal. They also ensured that JG attained a solid position in the field of gastroenterology and achieved a significant milestone based on the following three factors: (1) establishing the journal's academic fame based on its scientific values, (2) a prompt and fair review process, and (3) fair administration as a journal hosted by the academic society that includes appropriate printing process. In particular, the contribution of the JG in the field of gastroenterology is becoming increasingly important; the impact factor and the number of citations of JG have reached unexpected levels (Fig. 1). To our knowledge, JG is one of the top-ranked monthly English medical journals published in Japan. This is a high honor for all the members of the Japanese Society of Gastroenterology who have

always enthusiastically supported us. The new editorial board is aware of the importance of this and has pledged to fulfill all its responsibilities.

A retrospective look shows the following changes brought about by the former editorial team:

1. Creation of new frontiers in the field of gastroenterology.

Similar to that in other medical journals, the trends in the area of interest that reflect changes of significantly important diseases have also shifted dynamically in the field of gastroenterology. For example, with respect to the research on hepatitis C, almost no studies are now reporting high-intensity treatments such as treatments involving interferons. However, studies on the use of direct antiviral drugs (DAAs) have dramatically increased. It is noteworthy that with the increasing popularity of the universal DAA treatment, the number of studies reporting DAAs has decreased. In contrast, there has been an exponential increase in the number of papers focusing on non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and hepatocellular carcinoma. This is similar to the global trend in gastroenterology (Fig. 2). Similarly, with respect to other studies pertaining to the gastrointestinal tract, there has been a reduction in the number of studies on gastric cancer that was the leading cause of mortality in Japan. Instead, the number of publications on inflammatory bowel diseases has increased substantially along with the increase in their understanding regarding the pathogenesis and available treatment options. Furthermore, as we know, gut microbiota has exerted considerable impact as a new research area in the field of gastroenterology. The new editorial team will also anticipate future areas of interest in the field of

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Fig. 1 Annual changes in number of cites to articles published in previous 2 years and Impact Factor

Fig. 2 Chronological changes of topics appeared in PubMed data regarding field of hepatology. *AIH* autoimmune hepatitis, *HBV* hepatitis B virus, *HCV* hepatitis C virus, *HCC* hepatocellular carcinoma, *NAFLD* non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, *NASH* non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, *PBC* primary biliary cholangitis, *PSC* primary sclerosing cholangitis

Fig. 3 The authors of articles citing JG by location

gastroenterology and intends to put JG at the core of the next generation research in gastroenterology.

- Achievement of the position as an international journal of gastroenterology.

Fortunately, the papers published in JG have been cited by researchers worldwide, as shown in Fig. 3. It is noteworthy that this positive change is not attributable to the increased number of self-citations and recent data shows that the percentage of self-citations is less than 10% for the JG. Thus, it has been objectively demonstrated that the number of papers in JG has attracted attention from other gastroenterology

journals. This is also evident from the number of papers submitted from different regions or countries. There has been an increase in the number of papers submitted to the JG every consecutive year; however, most of them are from countries other than Japan (Fig. 4). Therefore, the new editorial team of the JG will take the important responsibility of understanding the journal's position as an international journal like the former editorial team and will continue to work toward attracting outstanding research from all over the world.

- Establishment of a prompt and fair review process and appropriate printing management.

Although the number of submissions has increased, the number of annual publications in the magazine has not

Fig. 4 Submission by location of the authors

increased. Thus, the percentage of papers that cannot be accepted for publication in JG has increased considerably. During the tenure of the previous editorial team, the acceptance rate of JG was maintained at < 10%, because the decision of acceptance was dependent on the value of the research described in the manuscript in the field of gastroenterology. In other words, we were unable to accept the manuscript even though the methods and interpretation were correct; however, if it did not meet the current JG publication standards, the articles were rejected. Fortunately, these manuscripts can be submitted to Open Journals elsewhere. Moreover, the review process for the JG has been shortened. This was a very important achievement of the previous editing team. Thus, we treat each submission with due respect so that the submitted studies can be matched with suitable journals in the shortest time. As is well known, a fair peer review process is very critical; thus,

we encourage and promptly invite a third, external peer reviewer, when no consensus can be achieved by the original reviewers. Furthermore, it is a great achievement of the former editorial team that after the peer review process, the duration from the date of online print to that of physical print has been significantly shortened. This is very important, because long waiting periods after online printing could hamper the true value of accepted manuscripts. Thus, the previous editorial team decreased the number of manuscripts that were in line for physical publication. The new editorial team will also retain this policy to prevent a backlog of publications waiting to be published in the physical form.

The JG has made great progress owing to the above three editorial factors. It is the responsibility of the new editorial team to maintain the reputation and contribution of the JG in the field of gastroenterology. Fortunately, members of the new editorial board and the associate editors from the previous team have a common understanding regarding our ultimate mission. Moreover, the society secretariats, Ms. Etsuko Ohta and Mr. Ryota Iwata, have always supported this mission with their hard work. We are also blessed with the exceptional luck of receiving full guidance from the directors-in-charge, Prof. Naoya Sakamoto and Prof. Tetsuji Takayama. The first task of the new editorial board was to determine a new cover page style, as seen in this issue. As mentioned in the Bible, the situation can be understood by the phrase, “pour new wine into new wineskins”. In addition, the editorial board pledges to forward the coming editorial term with the mission to establish the JG in a position for transmitting the frontiers in the research of new digestive diseases in global perspective.

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