Message from the new Editor-in-Chief

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1 Introduction

In 2004, I was appointed to a working group (WG) to launch a new English-language journal under the co-leadership of Prof. Shigeru Sanada of the Japanese Society of Radiological Technology (JSRT) and Dr. Hideo Murayama of the Japan Society of Medical Physics (JSMP) [1, 2]. The WG was strongly motivated by the goal of having the two societies jointly publish an international journal for the scientific exchange of their members with researchers in the world. Its persistent activities during the next few years convinced both societies to sponsor a joint official journal, Radiological Physics and Technology (RPT). The sponsor societies invited a distinguished scientist, University of Chicago Professor Kunio Doi, as a founding Editor-in-Chief (EIC) and contracted with the Springer publishing company for publication.

Since its first issue in 2008, RPT has grown steadily under the strong leadership of the EIC [3–5], consistently featuring a unique editorial policy of being supportive to inexperienced authors. For example, its editorial process incorporates language editing of submitted manuscripts twice: to review and to accept [6] and voluntary expert reviewers are requested to look not for reasons to reject but for pieces of scientific merit and to assist authors in revisions toward eventual publication. In terms of international recognition, RPT has officially been supported by the Asia-Oceania Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics since 2016 [7] and by the International Organization for Medical Physics since July 2021. I was involved in the Editorial Board (EB) of RPT as a founding Associate Editor (AE) until the end of 2020 and then as a Deputy Editor (DE) substituting for Dr. Masahiro Endo.

In recent years, it has become a major concern in the EB that the absence of a Journal Impact Factor (JIF) [8] would make RPT critically unattractive among international journals. The EB has made efforts for RPT to obtain JIF in many ways: awarding its excellent authors and reviewers, holding scientific-writing seminars for potential authors, publishing various promotion articles for RPT [1–7, 9–12], etc. In the annual EB meeting in June 2021, the EIC expressed his firm determination to increase journal impact and to get a JIF assigned as a top priority mission for the coming years. While I leave details of the EIC's sudden resignation to Prof. Doi himself [13], everyone concerned with RPT is missing this great leader and may wonder how a successor, who happens to be myself, will run the journal.

In this editorial article, as the newly appointed EIC, I express my initial intentions, ideas, and requests to you not just to sustain RPT but to bring it up to a new competitive level as an international journal. I would like to hear critical as well as constructive opinions and new ideas from you so that we can design the best achievable plan for RPT.

2 Editorial board

I intend to set a nonrenewable fixed term of six years to my EIC appointment and to share more responsibilities and honors with DEs so that the EB system can be more sustainable without an extraordinary scientist for its EIC. I am also considering a renewable fixed term of two years for the EB members from the JSRT and JSMP in compliance with their respective committee systems to periodically promote their motivation for editorial management. For a manuscript submitted to RPT, the EIC assigns a DE of relevant specialty, the DE assigns an AE as an expert, and the AE invites more experts to organize a review team. For the EB members delegated by the supporting international organizations, the terms should follow their respective memoranda of understanding. I am also considering setting up an international advisory subcommittee under the EB to further promote their activities in advising as well as authoring and

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reviewing for RPT. For the management of the EB, I have asked Prof. Doi and Dr. Endo, who led the EB for many years, to stay as Senior Advisors for continuing consultation. Finally, I am grateful to the sponsor societies, or more specifically, the responsible directors of the respective societies, for their continuing support in administrative matters.

3 Submission guidelines

The submission guidelines in the journal website [14] must always be updated in accordance with journal policies. I would like to implement some changes in the journal scope, as recently proposed in the EB. For example, one is the abolition of the article type of Clinical Procedures and Techniques, which tends not to contribute to science as proven by citation metrics. Another is the clarification of exclusive conditions for contents: political claims, region-specific local subjects, medical research without new physics or technology, oppositely too little relevance to medicine, replications without new findings, etc., as such contents are inadequate for RPT as an international scientific journal. The updated submission guidelines will naturally be followed by authors in the submission, by reviewers in the assessment, and by editors in the decision.

While the editorial policy of constructive review is favorable for inexperienced authors and will be kept as standard, I am considering offering another option of accelerated review to authors who want an early decision at increased risk of rejection, rather than going through time-consuming review cycles. The authors may affirmatively request the option at the time of submission. Similarly, the free language-editing service may optionally be skipped with the consent of the reviewers. The accelerated-review option will surely attract demanding authors in competitive research fields. Other editorial procedures that are currently missing but necessary in the submission guidelines are the option for authors to appeal to the EIC on the occasion of rejection and the request to report reasons on the occasion of withdrawal. Such post-decision feedback may assure the practice of fair review and may prompt some improvements in editorial management.

4 Review guidelines

Peer review is a venue of scientific collaboration for researchers of a shared specialty, where every researcher writes or reviews at times. For inexperienced reviewers, the EB has prepared a guide to writing a review report [15]. In addition to the reported contents, timeliness, fairness, and consistency are essential for reviewing. While there may naturally be variations of assessment among reviewers,

which will be harmonized by the handling editor's decision, inconsistency between a report and a decision per reviewer may confuse the editors and the authors. There are four types of decisions. Accept: the manuscript is ready for publication. Minor revision: all problems are obviously correctable in revision, not requiring re-review. Major revision: some problems may possibly persist or appear after revision, requiring re-review. Reject: the study itself has critical problems and must be redone or redesigned. On rejection, the reviewers must identify critical problems, desirably suggest directions for solutions, and then may encourage the authors to resubmit a new manuscript only after solving all the problems. To save precious time, re-review after minor revision should normally be skipped or accelerated. I will consider integrating such review guidelines into the editorial management system to be followed by handling editors and reviewers surely and effectively, for which I expect generous support from managing editors and editorial assistants of the publishing company.

5 Invited articles

Review papers on timely topics in emerging fields generally collect many early citations as proven for RPT [10] and it is natural for us to strive to increase such review papers for JIF. Currently, some voluntary EB members propose ideas for review papers after pre-negotiation with acquainted authors to be granted by the EIC, which may not be a sustainable procedure. I am considering setting up an invited-article subcommittee under the EB with extra voluntary members for organized arrangements: strategically identifying the topics, broadly collecting the author candidates, and negotiating with them in a systematic manner.

The front cover highlighting a legendary scientist per annual volume is an impressive feature of RPT. So far, Prof. Doi the EIC has been committed to the selection of scientists and the recruitment of authors for associated bibliographic articles. I will gladly continue this distinctive tradition but want to seek greater help from other EB members for the nomination of candidates.

6 Sponsor societies

Academic society meetings are another form of scientific exchange. Both the JSRT and JSMP are members of the Japan Radiology Congress (JRC) and jointly hold their regular scientific meetings at the same venue every April. In addition to customary joint RPT sessions to award or enlighten authors and reviewers, I want to extend the collaboration with the meeting-organizing committees on the

integrated recruitment of renowned scientists for invited lectures of the meetings and invited articles of RPT.

Both societies publish their respective Japanese-language journals: the Japanese Journal of Radiological Technology and the Japanese Journal of Medical Physics. They publish regular articles featuring award-winning or invited-review papers of RPT and irregular articles encouraging their members to submit manuscripts to RPT [6, 11, 12]. I want to extend the inter-journal collaboration to editorial management, such as mutual submission transfer: manuscripts of Japan-specific local subjects to the Japanese journals and manuscripts of globally appealing contents to RPT with translation, under the consent of the authors.

Both societies constantly delegate special task groups to report guidelines for new technologies, multi-institutional surveys, grant-aided research, etc. Some resulting reports may deserve publication for broad readers worldwide, which could be done by RPT. I am considering the addition of a new article type of Task Group Reports and then having the invited-article subcommittee negotiate with the task groups for contribution in the early stages of their activities through the societies.

7 Final notes

Using this opportunity of writing, I have presented many immature ideas: some discussed in the EB and some that I have had in my mind. These ideas will be elaborated with more ideas in the EB and prioritized according to democratically defined editorial policies. The ideas, however, can only be realized by continuing contribution and support from authors, readers, voluntary reviewers, the sponsor societies, the publishing company, and the supporting international organizations. As the EIC, I will lead the EB as a team to manage RPT as a society-sponsored international journal to advance medical physics and radiological technology in Japan and in the world.

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