

Looking at the future, with the power of the present: our targets, our tools, our needs

S. NEGRINI

It is not easy to serve as the Chief-Editor of such a journal as *Europa Medicophysica*, undoubtedly the leading scientific rehabilitation journal in Italy (where it was born) and in all Mediterranean countries. This is even more difficult if you know that your predecessors have been Fiandesio, Boccardi, Franchignoni, and Di Benedetto! When I was called for the first time by Alessandro Giustini I felt not only the honour, but the onus too: I had to give my contribution as physiatrist and scientist, but also as scientific journalist and editor. I hope that all the valuable people that are part of the team and me will answer adequately to the needs.

We begun a long period of discussions and meetings to start up what should be the final effort of our journal to be adequately recognized in the scientific context: this is vital for the journal as well as for the entire Mediterranean rehabilitation community, whose particular characteristics and knowledge cannot any more be neglected by the rest of the scientific world.

Bearing in mind this goal, I strongly feel that the flow of information between the journal and the readers about our targets, and how to reach them, should highly increase, and the aim of this first editorial is exactly to start a constant communication. We will then review and explain our targets and tools to everybody, knowing that our readership includes some researchers, but mainly physiatrists that want high quality papers able to increase their everyday practice, and sometimes don't know in details some typical aspects of the contemporary scientific world.

Address reprint requests to: S. Negrini, ISICO (Istituto Scientifico Italiano Colonna Vertebrale), Via Carlo Crivelli 20, 20122 Milano, Italy. E-mail: stefano.negrini@isico.it

ISICO (Italian Scientific Spine Institute), Milan, Italy

Our first target: the International Scientific Community

Not all journals are equivalents, and we all know that in the everyday world there are journals of low quality, while others can be trusted. *Europa Medicophysica* is in the last category, even if its quality can be and will be increased in the future. But, in all fields, it is mandatory to be recognised for what you are by your peers. Since many years there are different methods to define the excellence of scientific journals, even if today the most considered are 2: Index Medicus and the impact factor.

Index Medicus is a database collecting nearly all the most important scientific journals of the world, selected according to the quality both of contents and of the methodology they follow to accept a paper: these journals must have a strictly blinded peer-review process, and publish only high quality scientific papers (and consequently reject the others). Journals listed in Index Medicus can be found in the Medline database, and so they are easily retrieved by researchers and clinicians from all over the world and used for their papers and/or clinical work.

The impact factor, provided by Thomson Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), is the weight that a journal has in the scientific world. It is a measure of the frequency with which the articles of a journal have been cited in a particular year: it is obtained calculating the ratio between citations, in all the literature,

of the articles published by the journal in the previous 2 years, divided to the total number of citable papers published by the same journal during those previous 2 years. Not all journals receive an impact factor, but only those accepted by ISI according to their high quality standards, that are quite similar to those proposed by Index Medicus.

For many reasons, mostly historical and geographical, Italy and the Mediterranean area are undoubtedly underrepresented in both databases (Index Medicus and ISI), and in particular there are no rehabilitation journals coming from this part of the world; Europa Medicophysica is ready to be part of this community, and is the right journal to achieve this result, that is anyway only a new start in a different context.

Being recognised by these 2 organisms means that all our scientific Mediterranean Rehabilitation community will acquire much more visibility than ever, and that we will confront with the rest of the world. In fact, there are rehabilitation practices widely accepted and scientifically evaluated in our countries, that never reached the general audience because we are not read enough abroad: furthermore, this situation causes difficulties to Mediterranean researchers trying to publish in Indexed journals, where some topics are not fully understood; moreover, if they are able to publish there, this is even not known in our countries. This situation must definitively change.

We also planned other initiatives to be internationally known, such as the enrichment of our web site (you can find it in the site www.minervamedica.it, clicking on "Journals", "Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation", "Europa Medicophysica"), that will publish downloadable versions of all papers and will be strictly linked to the site of our Scientific Societies (www.simfer.it), or the production of mini-reviews such as the one you read in this issue of the journal, and the systematic involvement of researchers from outside the Mediterranean world in all aspects of the life of Europa Medicophysica.

Our tools: seriousness and scientificity

No way, we will never ever reach any target without these tools: seriousness and scientificity. They are written in the genes of Europa Medicophysica, but we will try to strengthen them. We have just started the new, electronic peer review process: papers can be

sent only electronically, and the entire process will be managed by e-mail, so to speed-up everything. We are hardly working to reduce at a maximum of 8 working weeks this process, even if we know that there are people waiting for an answer on their work for much more: we are sorry for this, and it will not happen in the future. Nobody can ask for short-cut peer reviews: we will always have complete reviews, so to have an adequate guarantee for everybody, researchers and readers. We have introduced a pre-review too, with the aim of directly give suggestions on how to modify the organisation of the paper, that in many cases is not adequate: this could allow to have in some cases immediate responses and avoid wasting time for the reviewers, that will be in any case involved once the paper will be resubmitted. The Assistant Editors (Donatella Bonaiuti, Gabriella Ceravolo, and Nicola Smania) will be the core of this entire process, together with the newly created Scientific Secretariat: moreover, fortunately we will continue to have the valuable help of the Past Chief-Editors, Franco Franchignoni, Paolo Di Benedetto, and Silvano Boccardi.

Call for papers

To reach the target, we definitively need good quality papers. We need to attract publications, and to stimulate people already producing good material, sometimes not fully finalized with a satisfactory publication because of the lack of knowledge on how to do it. This is why we will always adopt an educative peer-review, with the aim of teaching to authors how to increase the quality of papers. Moreover, we will soon publish a series on Methodological-Statistical issues that we hope will be useful to our readership, both to better understand what they are reading, and to better write what they want to publish. This contribution is due to the newly created role of Statistical Advisor (Roberta Carabalona), that we introduced in our Editorial Board. We are trying to promote some scientific Awards, such as the one already proposed by SIMFER last year. Together with the entire Editorial Board, we will select for publication the most interesting research papers presented in all scientific meetings we will be able to reach in the Mediterranean area, and we solicit all organizers to contact us with this aim. Finally, we ask for publications by each individuals: original papers, commentaries (such as the

ones you find in this issue), letters to the editor, case reports, technical notes, they are all welcome. And if someone has any new idea, please tell us.

We will work hard to obtain all this as soon as possible. We need help, and we propose to all people

interested in joining our effort to come out and let us know. For sure Europa Medicophysica, but I think all the scientific Mediterranean Rehabilitation community too, strongly need that we succeed in reaching our targets, and maintaining them in time.