Editorial

OTSR-RCOT: A journal designed to serve its authors and readers

OTSR-RCOT is already celebrating its 5th anniversary. An opportunity to look back, to take stock, but also to shape the future, which our organisation, combined with the logistical and technical support provided by our publisher, leads us to envisage with clarity and confidence.

The number of submissions has continued to increase steadily, by about 15% each year. Over the 5-year period, the cumulative increase has been 177%. Submissions from French groups have remained stable in absolute numbers but have been progressively diluted by a strong flow of papers from other parts of the world: French manuscripts accounted for only 28% of submissions in 2014 (47% in 2009), compared to 20% for other European countries and, as with many other journals, a majority of Asian papers, of 38%.

This robust increase in submissions comes with a moderate rise in the number of published articles (158 in 2014 versus 140 in 2013): the corollary is an increase in the rejection rate, which reflects the explicit policy of the editorial board to publish high-quality papers. The rejection rate in 2014 was 73% overall and reached 89% for case-reports, which are only acceptable if they provide highly original information. The substantial rise in papers submitted in English has increased such papers to 36% of all accepted articles.

In addition to the “regular” issues, special issues are driven by our partner societies (Société orthopédique de l'Ouest and Société française d'arthroscopie) and associate societies. These special issues contribute to enrich the repertoire of our journal by providing high-quality articles that usually discuss areas of expertise specific to each subspecialty. Another development is the addition since 2013 of the 20 instructional course lectures delivered at the annual meeting of our society, translated into English, and published in the 1st supplement to OTSR. This issue, directed by Denis Huten, considerably enhances the dissemination of the work done in France.

Our journal thus provides a well-rounded body of knowledge designed to meet the expectations of our authors and readers. How can we measure the extent to which these expectations are met? The impact factor, a widely used criterion, measures the overall appeal of a journal and not the intrinsic quality of the articles published in the journal. OTSR has shown remarkable progress, with an impact factor increasing from 0.546 in 2010 (the first released value) to 1.168 in 2013. It should be noted that this value, released in July 2014, was computed based on citations of articles published in 2011–2012. Thus, the impact factor is probably a rather sluggish indicator. This last value puts OTSR in the 39th position among orthopaedic journals in the “Orthopedics” category, which had 67 journals in 2013 (compared to only 48 in 20081).

The impact factor, however, is not the only measure of the attractiveness of a journal. Many other criteria can be used and, among them, the number of downloaded articles is instructive: it increased by 45% in 2014. Even more interesting is the type of cited articles, which contribute to the impact factor, and the type of downloaded articles.

All 20 most often cited articles are original research papers, including 17 from French or French-speaking authors. Many articles in this group focus on original features of French orthopaedics (EOS imaging system, dual-mobility prostheses, ceramic prostheses, induced membrane technique...). They reflect a high level of interest in this work shown by authors of other articles (according to the principle underlying the impact factor). Among downloaded articles, in contrast, most were reviews (13 of the top 20). These numbers illustrate clearly the 2-fold mission of a scientific medical journal: to allow experts to share their results by publishing their original articles, and to ensure dissemination of validated information via review articles that help readers keep their knowledge current. These two aims may seem contradictory; instead, they are the two pillars on which the policy of our journal is built.

Our editorial board has clearly understood the dual nature of the challenge: OTSR has one board for original articles and another for the instructional course lectures, which make up the majority of our review articles.

The quest for quality must drive all aspects of our work and serve as the compass that guides our every action.

Ensuring high-quality submissions requires the delivery of training in how to write a medical paper: OTSR-RCOT, with the help of the CNP-SoFCOT, AOT, and FCOT in particular, contributes to this training via classes, round tables, and e-learning tools. Another measure designed to improve the quality of submitted papers is the writing assistance provided by the submission site via templates or instructions to authors.

High quality of the submission review process is another key goal. Each submission is reviewed by an editor and at least two reviewers. This work takes time, a huge amount of time, and we are deeply grateful to all the members of the editorial board and editorial office. Dominique Rouleau (Montréal, Canada) for the upper limb and Arnaud Blamoutier (Rennes, France) for the spine are new arrivals to our editorial board. Our warmest thanks also go to the reviewers who work with us: without them, the journal would be pointless, and we are aware of their growing workload. We hope that the invaluable work they perform free of charge will soon be acknowledged, as it should be, via the continuous medical education system.

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Elsevier has developed new offers reflecting a clear understanding that the submission site can no longer be used only for submissions, but must also provide support to the authors, editors, and reviewers, via software specifically designed to assist in the publication process.

The creation of a single account, although no doubt unwelcome to a few contributors, has the advantage of assigning a single e-mail address and password for work as an author, reviewer, or editor on the online submission sites of the many journals published by the Elsevier group. In addition, the adoption in 2014 of the Open Researcher and Contributor ID (www.orcid.org) assigns a single alphanumeric code to each author who has had work published in the journal. A major advantage is that the identification code is permanent and unambiguous: thus, problems raised when several authors have the same name, when authors change their name, or when cultural differences exist across the way names are used (e.g., first name before or after the last name or use of a middle name) no longer prevent the identification of who wrote what – which improves the accuracy of reference lists! The advantages of this new system are obvious, in terms of both the time saved by not having to key in one’s identity every time (and not risking the mistakes often made at this step); of the ease with which authors can retrieve the full list of their validated publications from the ORCID base; and of the ability to further contribute, in their field, to the research activities that are linked within the base, which is fully interoperable with all other current systems.

In 2014, other, less conspicuous improvements have helped the editors to perform the work needed upstream of publication. Thus, to ensure the detection of redundancies and plagiarism, the journal now uses the CrossCheck/iThenticate tool. The Find Reviewers tool is now available to the editorial board to help select new reviewers, in addition to the reviewer database that is kept up to date: keywords and names of authors of submitted papers are automatically exported to the tool, which searches the literature to suggest reviewers, who can then be imported into the reviewer database by a simple click. Controls have also been incorporated into the online submission system to guarantee authorship, an area where misconduct may occur, such as adding a name to the list of authors in the revised version of a manuscript.

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Authors or readers may see the various versions of a paper and the correspondence about the paper: by clicking on the CrossMark logo (shown on the first page of this editorial), the current status of a document can be displayed and additional information obtained, for instance about any updates. The addition of Mendeley (www.mendeley.com) to the tools incorporated into the various Elsevier platform, primarily ScienceDirect and Scopus, has opened up the journal to information-sharing via social networks.

In 2015, in addition to the impact of the journal, the impact of each article will be measured. Article Level Metrics is a recently developed tool that assesses citations and comments in large databases, social networks, and among the general public; consultations and downloads on the journal site(s), and sharing of the information in the article. Other innovations scheduled for 2015 include the launch early in the year of a new site for OTSR, which will heighten the visibility of the work reported in the journal. Finally, our journal is changing its look with this first issue of 2015, which boasts a new cover inspired by the CNP-SoFCOT colour scheme, which gives pride of place to red, white, and black, against a gnarled tree.

Many thanks to all for your contributions and your invaluable help.

Disclosure of interest

Philippe Beaufils is the Editor-in-Chief of OTSR-RCOT.
Pascal Léger is a salaried employee of Elsevier Masson.

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