Editorial

After nearly a decade of publishing *Pharmaceutical Research,* we are now approaching a turning point in editorial emphasis. During the phase of rapid development and ever increasing manuscript submissions, the editors' main concern was to pay justice to each manuscript submitted while preventing an unacceptable backlog of accepted papers to build up. The annually increasing page volume, set in the preceding year, usually was outpaced by increasing manuscript submissions. Because editorial budgets and subscriptions fees must be kept reasonable, constraints on the page volume set by the AAPS compelled the editors to apply more stringent criteria for acceptance of papers to be published in *Pharmaceutical Research.* Over the previous 6 months, the rejection rate approached 40–50%, which is high relative to other journals in the pharmaceutical sciences.

Authors are of course rather sensitive to rejection of a paper, and a self-selection process is beginning to set in whereby papers of lower quality are no longer submitted. Indeed, the overall submission rate is stabilizing at 500–600 papers per year. Further, the average length per paper is inching up, exceeding six pages in the first few issues of 1994. At the same time it has become more difficult to reach a quota for rejections because there are more manuscripts that receive above average priority from the referees. Because of these trends, we currently have a larger backlog of accepted papers than is desirable, approximately equivalent to one full issue (25 papers). However, with a stable submission rate, we can now plan the page budget more accurately, to achieve the following goals.

1. The sole acceptance criteria for *Pharmaceutical Research* should reflect the quality of the research, its technological advancement, or clinical utility. The editors should ask the question: Does it really make a difference if any given papers is published? While the work must be sound and the data interpretation and presentation within acceptable limits, the key criterion thus becomes whether new scientific ideas are proposed, or whether the results are likely to be of practical use in technology, basic research, and clinical application. Further efforts must be made to allow non-conventional hypotheses and findings into print even if the immediate utility is unclear, so that *Pharmaceutical Research* remains a broadly-based journal in the pharmaceutical-biomedical sciences. Each contribution is *peer* reviewed by scientists familiar with the particular area of research presented. Therefore, there is no bias against any particular field, other than the bias that may be prevalent among scientists in that field.

2. The time from manuscript receipt to eventual publication must be further shortened. We aim for a 2 month reduction over the next 2 years. Further shortening of the publication time in subsequent years will require a major overhaul of the entire editorial and publishing process, aimed for in 1995/1996.

3. With more discretionary journal space becoming available, we will reactivate our earlier plan to have an active section on topical issues in sciences policy, economics, ethics, health care, etc. Anyone is invited to submit contributions, and the Associate Editor EMMS will take charge of this aspect, in collaboration with all other Editors.

4. We will continue to emphasize concise manuscipts that have the strongest impact on the intended target audience. Further, the longer the manuscript, the higher the priority score it must achieve before the Editors consider it for publication. However, the Editors have the prerogative to waive page limits when appropriate. We do not wish to curtail the presentation of pertinent experimental data or the full discussion of the new aspects of the work. Authors are encouraged to communicate special circumstances to the Editors that may have lead to a longer manuscript. For example, if an author combines two smaller studies that could have been submitted individually as short reports (of average priority), because the combined paper provides a more comprehensive view of the work, the Editors should be informed of the author's strategy, for consideration of a page limit waiver. In many cases, careful editing can pare down a paper significantly without losing any of its original impact. The following are recurrent examples of wasteful use of journal space:

- There are too many figures and tables, including all experimental results ever obtained.
- Data in figures and tables overlap.
- Figures are drawn such that they cannot be reduced to single column length.
- Numerous repetitions of the main results and conclusion in the text.
- The discussion repeats previous publications and includes aspects of the work that were not experimentally tested.

What main developments will shape the future of the pharmaceutical sciences? In today's world where borders among disciplines are blurred and much of the cutting edge advance occurs in the interdisciplinary zones, summary definitions of multidisciplinary fields may become obscure within a short time period. We hope that *Pharmaceutical Research* can serve as a gauge of further developments in the pharmaceutical area, as it begins to compete for high quality research work which could find entry into any of the top level scientific journals in numerous competing fields. Whether or not an article is submitted to journals such as *JACS, JBC, CPT,* and others, or to *Pharmaceutical Research,* will depend on the target audience and the perception as to how much the pharmaceutical sciences contribute to current cutting edge research. It is clear that pharmaceutical scientists (in industry and academia) do top level research, but do they consider their work as contributing to the pharmaceutical sciences, rather than to a specialty area in the chemical or biomedical sciences? The answer may be negative, possibly because no suitable pharmaceutical publication forum was available. We think that *Pharmaceutical Research* now represents such a forum, and we want to get first crack at the excellent pharmaceutical research being done around the world. By being more selective in what is published, the citation impact factor of *Pharmaceutical Research,* calculated by the Institute of Scientific Information, now approaches the benchmark of 2 and is rising (being already the highest among comparable pharmaceutical science journals). The frequency of citations is indeed an important measure of a journal's success, and it reinforces editorial policy to select papers with criteria of current relevance and quality.

Last, I wish again to thank the Editors, Editorial Advisors, and referees for their excellent work. Naming regional Editors in Europe and Japan has maintained *Pharmaceutical Research* at a highly visible international level. Because of his numerous other responsibilities, Professor Douwe Breimer has indicated his wishes to be replaced as Editor Europe, beginning in 1994. Douwe has been a strong supporter of the journal from its inception, and as an internationally renowned scientist he has lent stature to its reputation. The AAPS and the pharmaceutical science community throughout the world are indebted to his diligent and productive service, and the editorial board thanks him most cordially for his support and colleagialism. We are now searching for his successor, and I would like to encourage any application or nomination for this important editorial position.

Wolfgang Sadée
Editor-in-Chief
Pharmaceutical Research

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