

## Keynotes from the New Editor-in-Chief

As announced in a recent issue of *Acta Cytologica* [1, 2], Dr. Marluce Bibbo recently terminated her 10-year period (2004–2013) as Editor-in-Chief. As her successor, I am convinced that I share the feelings of the entire cytology community (International Academy of Cytology members and other readers) in expressing our sincere appreciation to Dr. Bibbo for the monumental work that she did for this journal. I would also like to use this opportunity to extend my deepest personal gratitude to Marluce for all that she did to adapt the journal to the publishing business of the 21st century. I second the statement by Dr. Schneider and Dr. Schmitt [2] that *Acta Cytologica* today, in its 57th year of publication, continues to be the only truly international journal in the field, and is recognized as such by the cytology community worldwide.

However, the turmoil in the entire publishing business that has been witnessed over the past decade has not passed without touching *Acta Cytologica*. Unfortunately, the position of the journal is no longer what it was during the first four decades of its existence [3, 4]. Omens of this development were already apparent when *Acta Cytologica* celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2007 [5]. Against this background, the input of Dr. Bibbo as Editor-in-Chief is even more admirable, in being able to pass the journal into the hands of the new editorship as the flagship publication for all members of the International Academy of Cytology.

This aspect must remain the single most important objective of the journal, fulfilling the purpose for which *Acta Cytologica* was originally established 57 years ago [3–5]. We cannot simply ignore recent developments, however. Most notably, we are facing a situation where *Acta Cytologica* is no longer the only journal in the field of cytopathology, and we need to be prepared for ever-increasing



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competition. Given that this relatively recent appearance of several new journals in our domain has not coincided with an increase in the number of active researchers interested in cytology (actually, the reverse is true), we can no longer expect the same number of high-quality manuscripts to be submitted as in past years. In the early 1980s, I personally witnessed the popularity of *Acta Cytologica* when, after submitting my first paper, I had to wait 2 years for its publication [6].

In this new situation, we need to accept the fact that, in addition to a reduced number of submissions, our journal does not necessarily receive all the best manuscripts published in the field. The studies recognized as the best by

readers and researchers usually accumulate the highest numbers of citations in the forthcoming literature. The annual number of citations, in turn, is the key variable used to calculate the bibliometric parameters used in ranking the scientific journals. The best-known parameter, but by no means the only one, is the impact factor (I.F.), calculated annually for each journal and used for the international ranking. Despite the fact that the new I.F. for 2012 (0.693) shows some improvement when compared to 2011 (0.488), *Acta Cytologica* is currently far behind its closest competitors. The new editorship has committed itself to improve this current, unsatisfactorily low ranking, assigned to the journal purely by this bibliometric index.

The reasons for this figure being this low are well recognized by the new editorship, but are far too complex to be exhaustively discussed here. As in medicine, in general, once the causative factors are identified, the remedy is soon invented. Fortunately, in our case, the remedy is not too complex to be shared with our readers: we need, from all of you, manuscripts that are not only more attractive to our readership, but most importantly, manuscripts that stimulate new research and hereby increase the annual citations of the journal. So why not decide to submit your best manuscripts to the only truly international journal of cytology!

One of the most effective ways a journal can erode its I.F. is to publish a large number of case reports; these usually accumulate very few (if any) citations. According to the new editorial policy, *Acta Cytologica* will accept case reports only with very strict criteria, and from now on, these will be called 'Novel Insights from Clinical Practice'. On the other hand, our journal is very much attracted to manuscripts for which an accumulation of abundant citations during the 2 years after publication can be anticipated.

With this in mind, there are three types of manuscripts that are particularly welcome: (1) high-quality original

papers, (2) review articles and (3) meta-analyses. Original papers on the applicability of new technologies are, without doubt, interesting for our readers, for example, automated microscopy for image cytometry or conventional cytology combined with DNA and RNA technologies to identify the relevant microbes or genomic changes aiding the routine diagnosis in cytology. Well-written reviews on important and/or controversial topics are a classic way of drawing the readers' attention, particularly if these are comprehensive and are based on coherent discourse of the subject. Meta-analysis (MA) is an approach that was introduced relatively recently that goes one step further by combining a systematic review (SR) of the published literature and an analytical stance to present the outcomes of interest (effect size estimates) using standardized (meta-analytical) statistical techniques. As Dr. AbdullGaffar accurately concluded in his thoughtful review of 2012 [7], SR and MA are rarely used in pathology compared to in clinical medicine, and 'cytopathologists should be more aware of the benefits of SR and MA in resolving uncertainties and improving the clinical applicability of level III diagnostic studies'. I fully share this view, and cordially invite everybody interested in writing a classic review or conducting a formal MA to express their intent to the Editorial Office.

I conclude by acknowledging the kind wishes of welcome by Dr. Marluce Bibbo [1] and Drs. Volker Schneider and Fernando Schmitt [2] as well as the encouragement they offer. I take over this new position with humble mind, but at the same time, consider it a major challenge and opportunity. I shall do my best to serve the global readership of *Acta Cytologica*. It is only with your unrestricted support that we can reinstate the prestige that this journal held for decades as the only international journal of cytology. I am looking forward to counting on your continuous support in this endeavor.

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## References

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