

EDITORIAL

The dream of a philologist

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A Swedish professor in the French language, Björn Larsson, at the University of Lund, Lund, Sweden has recently published a book with the above title. It contains nine short stories on the same theme, viz. the dreams of different researchers to make the ground-breaking discovery that changes the world [1]. The nine researchers, representing different research areas are all distinguished researchers, many of them with articles published in, for example, *Nature*. This did however not sufficiently satisfy them.

What value is it then to publish in *Acta Oncologica*? *Acta Oncologica* is the scientific periodical of the Nordic Oncological Societies and the Scandinavian Breast Cancer Group and has a Journal Impact Factor (JIF) of about 2 (most recently 2.274), whereas *Nature* has an impact factor of 28.751. The reputation is also much less. If the perspectives are that the discoveries should change the world, the value of a publication in *Acta Oncologica* is of course negligible. The far majority of us scientists most likely have dreams of making important discoveries, and some of us do. The discovery is then in itself of greatest importance, for the scientific community and for the scientist him/herself. Where it is published is secondary, although not irrelevant. You do not need to compare with such a high impact journal as *Nature*, it is sufficient to state that the experienced value is less than if published in the best oncology journals. The JIF is of great importance in many instances, not the least in applications for new positions or funding. As editor of the journal, I have previously expressed my attitudes to JIF [2,3], and they remain ambiguous.

Continuous support for scientific activities in the Nordic countries

Acta Oncologica is an international journal, although its base is in the Nordic countries. It receives most of submitted articles from other countries, and this proportion is increasing, and explains most of the substantial increase seen during recent years. From only about 200 submitted manuscripts some years ago, last year we received about 600 manuscripts and based upon the first half of 2008, we can expect well above 700. Although more manuscripts are presently accepted than before, reflected in a marked increase in the number of printed pages (from below 1 000 to 1 280 in 2007), this means an increased rejection rate (presently about 75% of spontaneously submitted articles). This may not immediately be appreciated by everyone but should be so by most since it results in improved average quality of the published papers. The external review process of *Acta Oncologica* works very well from my point of view, although I now and then wish for a more rapid or thorough response. The median (and 80% percentile) time for the review process is short (<30 days), but sometimes we continue to have those “low-water-marks”. I am sorry for these all the time I have to excuse our imperfectness. The Nordic editors continue to complain about difficulties in getting acceptance from invited scientists to act as reviewer and, above all, to get a good response on time. Every scientist submitting a paper to a journal appreciates timely and accurate reviews from others. We have recently renewed the advisory board, to hopefully help in the review process. It is also a great pleasure when you

get signals from a good scientist to act more frequently as a reviewer.

The increased number of papers accepted has temporarily resulted in longer times from acceptance to publication. This is a major disadvantage, and I am presently working hard to shorten the time, not primarily by rejecting more, but to negotiate with the publisher to print more pages (could be above 1 500 in 2008). All accepted articles are however rapidly published on the net, and freely available for all subscribers. The content can thus be read by many long before publication, and the article can easily be referred to and cited. All articles published in *Acta Oncologica* are freely available for everyone six months after publication, and selected articles are immediately available on the net. Please feel free to suggest that your article should be exempted from the six month rule.

Support for scientific meetings

Acta Oncologica has during the past several years supported scientific meetings in many different ways, either as full or partial support of the entire conference or for a specially invited speaker, giving a so-called *Acta Oncologica Lecture*. You have probably seen the advertisements in the journal with an invitation to suggest topics for future meetings. A requirement for this support is that it results in a publication aimed for *Acta Oncologica*. During the past year we have published two *Acta Oncologica Lectures* [4,5]. Extended abstracts from the XV Medical Symposium by the Yrjö Jansson Foundation about Etiology and prevention of gastrointestinal tract cancers August 2006 were published in issue number 3 [6–12] and papers from the 4th *Acta Oncologica Symposium on Long-term cancer survivorship* in Oslo, Norway September 2006 in issue number 4 in 2007 [13–25]. Papers from two meetings supported during 2007 will be published in forthcoming issues. A large cohort study based on employment and employed populations, assessing the risks of different cancers, the Nordic Occupational Cancer Study (NOCCA) was the topic of a meeting in Oslo, in December 2007. The St Olavs days in Trondheim, Norway, December 2007 dealt with colorectal cancer and in particular the treatment of early rectal cancer. During 2008 support has already been provided to three international meetings. The papers have already been published (issue number 4, 2008) from one of them, the Danish Breast Cancer Cooperative Group on the occasion of the 30 year anniversary meeting and 5th *Acta Oncologica Symposium*. Those from the Image-Guided Radiation Therapy Meeting (IGRT) in Aarhus, Denmark in June 2008 will be published

in the next issue (number 7 2008) and those from the meeting, also in Aarhus in June this year, of the Nordic Association for Clinical Physics (NACP) early next year.

Last but not the least – Research Fellow Post

The board of the Acta Oncologica Foundation decided in 2007 to support scientists working in the Nordic countries. The task was given to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (Vetenskapsakademien) to practically handle the advertising, scientific peer-review process and employment of part time (50%) clinically working researchers (e.g. physician, physicist, psychologist, nurse, epidemiologist). The advertising can be found at www.kva.se. We are very happy to welcome Ass Professor Beatrice Malmer, Department of Radiation Sciences, Umeå, Sweden as the first holder of such a 5-year Research Fellow Post. Beatrice Malmer is a very successful researcher working with the molecular epidemiology of brain tumours and Hodgkin Lymphoma. Based upon the report from the evaluating scientific committee, she got the position in competition with a group of very competitive researchers. Beatrice Malmer is a member of the *Acta Oncologica* Advisory Board since some years and we hope for a good continued collaboration. A new application for yet another position will be due later this year.

I believe that most authors highly value their papers accepted for publication in *Acta Oncologica*. I highly appreciate the submission of an increasing number of good articles from all over the world, even if I understand that they may not be the very best papers of some of the research groups or that they were first submitted to this journal. I also hope you value the different scientific activities supported by *Acta Oncologica*. Many of the articles arising from these activities are the most downloaded and cited articles.

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