Brave new world: Our journal has become an Open Access journal

In 2015, it has been 6 years since the Journal of Diabetes Investigation (JDI) was launched as the official journal of the Asian Association for the Study of Diabetes (AASD). Since the start, it has been a bimonthly printed journal, and our journal has been making satisfactory progress. However, we decided that our journal become an Open Access journal from last year, 2014, as previously announced1. It is important for us to look over the background that the shift from the old to the new system was effected smoothly in the short history since being launched. I am sure that looking over this now will prove of use someday, not only for the members of AASD, but also for contributors from all over the world.

After the first printed issue of JDI in 2010, the first Impact Factor was released with the evaluation of 1.801 in 2011. Contributions come from all over the world, and in 2013 almost 359 papers were submitted as original articles. The acceptance rate was approximately 27%. In 2013, the number of contributions markedly increased as compared with those in 2012. However, as we switched over to the new Open Access system during 2013, the exact numbers of contributions in 2014 are not clear. The Impact Factor in 2012 and 2013 decreased to 1.770 and 1.496, respectively, in inverse proportion to the marked increment of contributions. This means that the awareness of our journal is not so high yet, resulting in low citations from articles in our journal despite many papers of high quality, not only from Asia, but also from other parts of the world.

As mentioned previously in our journal, “a number of excellent papers regarding ethnic difference in the pathophysiology of the disease have been submitted and published during the past 4 years1. Even if it is only a small part of the whole, I am sure our journal plays an important role among the many journals in the field of diabetes, providing valuable information about Asian people with diabetes and its related disorders. Whatever JDI contributes, it will prove to be useful for the members of AASD, in both fundamental and clinical research, and patient management. However, I fear that such valuable information might not spread widely to the rest of the world, because the journal is still too new and not yet well known in the academic commentary.” From this viewpoint, the first thing we must do is to spread the awareness of our journal, JDI. Thus, we plunged JDI into full Open Access from the first issue of 2014 (Vol. 5, Issue 1), hopefully resulting in much more exposure of either basic or clinical studies of diabetes in Asia to the rest of the world.

In a recent issue of Nature2, interesting information was reported in an article titled, ‘Open-access website gets tough.’ My own rough interpretation and opinion of the main point of the report is the following. In 2003, a website to index Open Access journals was created, and there were just 300 titles. However, today – over a decade later – the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) comprises almost 10,000 journals2. Its increase has been almost 300-fold during the past decade from 2003 to 2013. It is amazing that it grew so rapidly in such a short time. According to a report in Science3, much of the scientific publishing of scholarly articles has moved to Open Access since the advent of the Internet. It is thought that Open Access reached a ‘tipping point’ around 2011. On the other hand, the increased publishing of academic articles through the system of Open Access journals causes some serious problems, in that they are not finding new publications to include, but keeping the dodgy operators out2. Thus, it says that the quality-control check of all journals is necessary for DOAJ to become a more useful tool for funders, librarians and researchers who want to look up information on a publication or import its metadata into their categories. I am sure most researchers agree with this proposal. It is also mentioned that ‘Those journals meeting the highest criteria-expected to be about 10–15% of the total-will also be given a seal of best practice2. It introduces an opinion, ‘We need to show which journals come up to a minimum standard of quality2. Moreover, in the latest issue of Nature4, it warns ‘Open Access is tiring out peer reviewers’, resulting in suffering from the maintenance for the quality of journals. That is to say, ‘if the number of journals and manuscripts grows faster than the number of scientists, the pressure on peer reviewers has to increase’ As a result, papers will be assigned to reviewers who are not the experts in the area. It is concerned that ‘quality will suffer unless something is done’. As it is very serious and important message to all journals and scientists, we should listen its warning and make every effort to prevent the deterioration of quality. It is an obligation for all journals. However, to maintain a good quality of new journals, like JDI, it is necessary for the members of the editorial staff to review each manuscript carefully with up-to-date knowledge and wide experience, contributing to preventing an unethical manuscript. Furthermore, when the evaluation is made of either revision or rejection of any manuscripts, they must give the authors a detailed explanation of their decision, resulting in the development of the journal due to their constant efforts. The Editor-In-Chief of JDI really hopes that all reviewers, including the members of the Editorial Board staff, do their best to maintain the high quality of our new journal.

The current situation of JDI after moving to an Open Access journal is the following. From the early and limited data...
(January 2014 to November 2014), the disadvantage is that the number of contributions has decreased by almost 30%. In contrast, the advantage is that the number of full-text downloads has increased greatly, as shown in Figure 1 – almost 3.6-fold as compared with those in 2013. This suggests that many researchers and clinicians have a high interest in the articles reported in JDI, hopefully resulting in increased exposure to the rest of the world of either basic or clinical studies of diabetes in Asia, and contributing to the prevention of diabetes and its related complications through good care and suitable treatment. One of the possible reasons why a reduction of contributions to JDI has been observed after becoming an Open Access journal is likely that the charge of article publication is expensive. In our case, the amount payable for an AASD member is $500, but the charge for a non-member is $3,000. For an AASD member, the leftover charge is covered by the Society. It is a merit for an AASD member. As mentioned in my previous article, there are both advantages and disadvantages in everything. Open Access journals are no exception; as they have been mentioned previously, I will not mention them again.

We have just become an Open Access journal, reinforcing the Aims and Scope of JDI, ‘Translated research focused on the exchange of ideas between clinicians and researchers is welcome. Authors and readers from all countries are welcome’. Our Open Access journal is in its infancy at the present time. Thus, we must nurture it as a source of information from Asia with the same tender loving care as we would grow various flowers and vegetables in the garden.

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