

Varia

The EHJ's new impact factor is 15.2 – surpassing *Circulation* and solid no. 2 worldwide

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The Beginning

The *European Heart Journal* was founded by the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) in 1980 as its first flagship journal [1]. Starting with Desmond G. Julian as Editor-in-Chief – and with no impact factor – the journal slowly grew in importance and scientific impact thanks to the efforts and of the founding editor and subsequent editors Henry E. Kulbertus, Kim Fox and Franz van de Werf [2].



Figure 1: The editors of the *European Heart Journal*.

When the current editorial team (fig. 1) took over the *European Heart Journal* at the end of 2008, the journal had established itself with a respectable impact factor of 8.9. It still lagged considerably behind its American competitors such as the American Heart Association's *Circulation* and the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*.

A novel strategy

The strategy of the current editorial team was global, with the intention to make the *European Heart Journal* a truly international journal [3]. This has led to an unforeseen growth in the number of manuscripts submitted to international journals [4]. The number of manuscripts submitted annually to the *European Heart Journal* has increased from a few hundred in the 1980s to around 3500 today [5]. Early on, it was obvious to us that the journal could be run only by an international team, which is why we invited deputy editors



Figure 2: The ESC Journal Family with the impact factors of each of the products (in alphabetical order): *Cardiovascular Research*, *EP-Europace*, *ESC Heart Failure (Open Access)*, *EuroIntervention*, *European Heart Journal*, *European Heart Journal Acute Cardiovascular Care*, *European Heart Journal Cardiovascular Pharmacotherapy*, *European Heart Journal Quality of Care and Clinical Outcomes*, *European Heart Journal Supplements*, *European Journal of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery*, *European Journal of Cardiovascular Imaging*, *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*, *European Journal of Heart Failure*, *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*. Reference: 2014 Journal Citation Reports® (Thomson Reuters, 2015) [13].

and associate editors from the US, Canada, Asia, Australia and Africa. Similarly, the editorial board was complemented by recognised cardiologists and scientists from all over the world.

The growth of the ESC journal family

With the *European Heart Journal*, its sister journals grew. Starting with *Europace* a growing number of specialty journals were introduced, currently reaching 13 titles plus the flagship of our surgical colleagues, the *European Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* (fig. 2). An increasing number of manuscripts are being transferred with reviews obtained by the *European Heart Journal* to the editors of our sister journals, and are often highly cited [6]. Many manuscripts are truly better suited to specialists rather than a broad audience, because they focus on technical aspects or treatments only performed by specialists, or are preliminary or hypothesis gener-

ating. Last year 219 manuscripts were transferred, of which 56 were eventually published in *Cardiovascular Research*, *Europace*, *European Heart Journal – Cardiovascular Imaging* and *European Heart Journal – Cardiovascular Pharmacotherapy*, and the *European Journal of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery*.

Influence and Impact

Scientific journals played and continue to play a crucial role in the progress of medicine and research. There have been several attempts to measure the quality, importance and influence of a journal. Obviously, high quality scientific publishing is a must [7]. The peer-review process attempts to ensure the quality and originality of manuscripts. This requires that editors and their peers, ideally three or more reviewers, provide a prompt, constructive and unbiased assessment of the submitted work. While not perfect, the peer review process is a good solution, and better

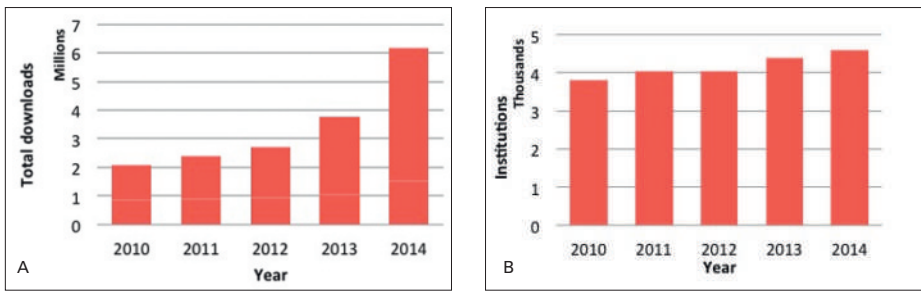


Figure 3: (A) Number of downloads of articles published in the European Heart Journal over time and (B) number of institutional subscriptions.

than any other, particularly if it also involves expert statistical advice. We have ensured that the latter is in place with the nomination of a statistical editor and a team of statistical experts, and this clearly improves the quality of published research [8–10].

It is essential to remember that a journal that is not widely read will have little influence. In the past, the distribution of a journal was a crucial measure of its importance. Today, the number of downloads of papers more appropriately reflects the interest of the community in the respective journal. Our editors are proud that downloads from the website of the *European Heart Journal* have increased markedly in recent years, reaching almost 6 million in 2014 (fig. 3A). Furthermore, the number of institutions subscribing to a journal is another measure of its attractiveness and influence. Again, thanks to the increasing visibility of the *European Heart Journal* and the efforts of our publisher, Oxford University Press, an increasing number of universities, research facilities and libraries subscribe to the journal (fig. 3B).

What downloads represent for practicing cardiologists, citations represent for scientists. While the former reflects influence, the latter is a measure of impact on scientific process [11]. Only data that are cited contribute to progress as they stimulate the work of colleagues and competitors. The most common measure of this is the impact factor, although other measures have been proposed as well. The impact factor of a given journal is the average number of citations received by indexed publications per paper published in the journal (published during the two preceding years), divided by the total number of citable items. In this context, citable items are research articles and clinical reviews – but not editorials, current opinions or letters to the editor.

This year, the *European Heart Journal* received an impact factor of 15.2 from Thomson Reuters, thereby almost doubling its impact factor in the course of 6 years (fig. 4). Of note, the difference in impact between the *European Heart Journal* and the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* and *Circulation* is smaller, when self-citations are not considered.

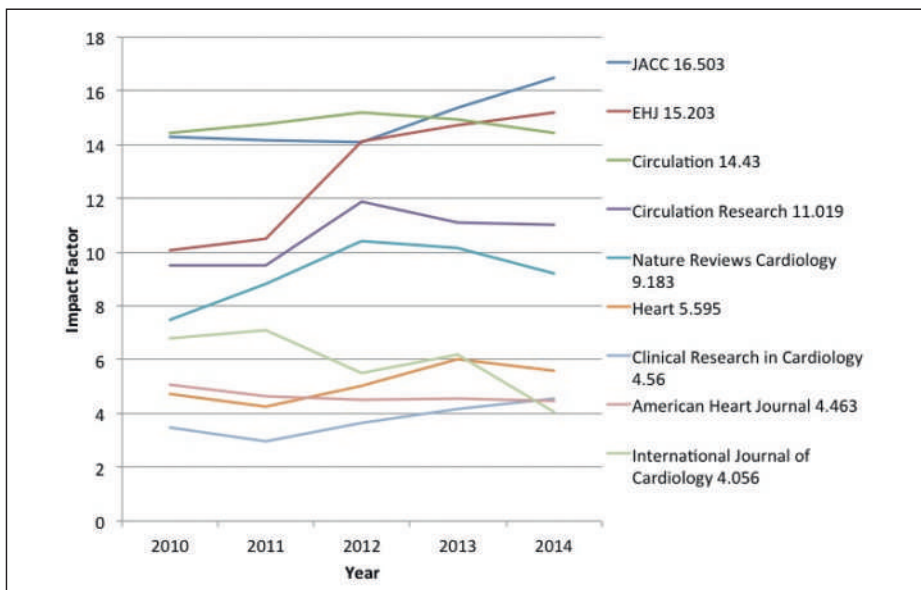


Figure 4: Impact factors of the most prominent cardiovascular journals over time (2014 Journal Citation Reports®).

Such an impressive success was only achievable with an excellent and devoted team of deputy editors, associate editors, managing editors and reviewers from all over the world. Indeed, we are fortunate to work with enthusiastic and experienced colleagues who provide balanced judgment and devote their time to helping us select the best papers. With this short editorial, the Editor-in-Chief of the *European Heart Journal* would like to thank all those who contributed to this success for the benefit of our readers, our society, the research community at large, and eventually our patients.

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