

## Editorial

## Passing the torch

I have been Editor-in-Chief of *Metabolism* for 41 years. When I agreed to take this position in 1969, I was concerned primarily about the scientific quality of the manuscripts that were published in the journal. To improve that, I requested, and the publisher agreed, to reduce to 64 the number of pages published each month. Initially, we published proceedings of symposia and invited papers that were of higher scientific quality than many of the manuscripts being submitted to *Metabolism*. This decision facilitated publication only of submitted manuscripts that represented the level of scientific quality we envisioned for the journal. In addition, the review process was significantly modified so that authors received decisions in a reasonable period of time. Categories of review were established including accept as submitted, accept after appropriate revision, reject in present form but could be revised and resubmitted with no prior commitment, and finally outright rejection. A priority system of 1 to 5 was assigned to each manuscript based on scientific merit and impact. One was the best priority, whereas 5 indicated that the manuscript was scientifically acceptable, but did not represent much advancement over presently available knowledge. Consequently, the number and scientific quality of the manuscripts submitted to the journal increased, which necessitated a steady increase in the number of pages published each month to the current number of 155.

Because *Metabolism* is not the official publication of a scientific organization, but is published by a private company, economics became important in determination of the increase in the number of pages of each monthly issue. When the number of submitted manuscripts deemed scientifically acceptable exceeded the number of pages that could be published each month, the priority for acceptance was raised initially to 4 or better and then to 3 or better.

The adoption of the Elsevier Editorial System by *Metabolism* in 2009 has had a major impact with more than twice as many manuscripts submitted to the journal. Because no additional pages were allotted to the journal, the priority for acceptance was raised to 2 or better. Consequently, the scientific quality of the manuscripts published has improved considerably. This is best exemplified by the increase in the impact factor for *Metabolism* from 2.01 in 2003 to 2.91 in 2008. The Elsevier Editorial System has reduced significantly the average time to get a review back from a reviewer from

4.3 to 2.7 weeks and the average time for an author to receive an initial decision concerning the manuscript from 10.5 to 6.2 weeks. A potential downside of the Elsevier Editorial System is that because of the larger number of accepted manuscripts, there has been an increase in the time from receipt of a manuscript to its publication. This has been mitigated somewhat by publication online of accepted manuscripts.

I am extremely indebted to and appreciative of the members of the Editorial Board of *Metabolism*. They deserve much of the credit for the success of the journal. Some of them have been on the Board for almost as long as I have been the Editor. They have provided excellent, thoughtful, unbiased, and constructive reviews of manuscripts in a timely fashion. The number of manuscripts reviewed annually by each member of the Board was limited to 6 or less by the liberal use of reviewers not on the Board. Working with the Board has been a real pleasure. They have taught me very much, especially since *Metabolism* encompasses a broad range of areas. Despite their outstanding job, I have recognized that reviewers might not always be infallible and have been willing to have manuscripts reevaluated by additional reviewers if the author felt that the initial reviews were inappropriate.

Finally, it is a great pleasure to acknowledge my deepest appreciation to Shelley Dearing and Barbara Wallace Sullivan, who have managed the journal office over the past 31 years. Shelley performed this function from 1978 to 1990, when she was succeeded by Barbara until the present time. They performed their duties in an exceptional fashion and were responsible for the smooth operation of the editorial process. They were extremely well organized and efficient. Their outstanding ability to pay attention to detail made my job much easier. In addition, they demonstrated great tact, patience, understanding, and helpfulness in dealing with both authors and reviewers.

Being Editor of *Metabolism* has been a wonderful learning experience for me. However, it is certainly time for a new look at the journal. I am confident that it will be in good hands with Prof Christos Mantzoros, the new Editor. I wish him the best of success.

James B. Field  
*Editor Emeritus*