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General Information

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Abstract Information

Abstract Title: A Rookie Editor-in-Chief's Experience with Peer Review
Abstract: Background: To reflect the first three years of being Editor-in-Chief of an international surgical journal with particular emphasis on its established peer review process.
Methods: The path of submitted manuscripts via a fully electronic manuscript management system was followed through a double-blinded review process from submission via first and up to final decision. Distributions between manuscript types and submitting country were analyzed. The decisions were analyzed regarding speed, comprehensiveness, type of manuscript, and country of manuscript origin.
Results: The Editor took office in spring 2010. Between 2009 and 2012, the number of submitted manuscripts rose from 380 to 520 per year, many being Case Reports, followed by original cardiac and original thoracic surgical papers. The top 7 submitting
countries were: Germany, China, Turkey, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Italy in various orders. The primary rejection rate (1st decision) rose from 65 to 69.75%, varying markedly between manuscript types and submitting country. Average time to 1st decision was 25 days (0-130), to final 32 days (0-173), with some variation depending on manuscript type. This was achieved by 127/145/177 people reviewing, with a case load of 1-20 each.

Conclusions: Immediate consequences for the journal:
1. A “sudden death” option for rejections without reviews was introduced.
2. The amount of case reports led to the foundation of an Open Access spin-off journal in 2012.
3. Introduction of „electronic first“ publishing including a DOI helped to manage the backlog and improved authors’ satisfaction.

Long-term implications:
1. Editors need to perform constant bibliometric analyses of their journals in order to pick up trends and to balance the content, as well as...
2. ...to cultivate relations with the reviewers and editorial board.
3. Careful and detailed observation may warrant the development of new publishing strategies.