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EDITORIAL

EJVES Facing a Number of Challenges, but Well Prepared for the Future — Just Like the ESVS!

As usual, Clarivate analytics published the 2021 Journal Citation Report in late June. The European Journal of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery (EJVES) has continued to lead the field of vascular surgery, for the 6th year in a row. After last year’s record journal impact factor (JIF) of 7.069, however, the actual EJVES JIF decreased to 6.427 in 2021 reflecting a decline of 9%. The reasons behind this are multifactorial and still being analysed. However, judging from the JIF development over recent years, the current JIF seems more aligned with the sustainable long term JIF target growth than last year’s, suggesting the latter was a positive outlier. Reassuringly, every single EJVES paper published in 2019 or 2020 was still cited 6.5 times on average in 2021 (compared with 7 times in 2020), underlining the sustained relevance of the EJVES’s scientific content.

As a result, the EJVES continues to rank among the top 6% of surgical journals (16th of 280), and among the top 20% of peripheral vascular journals (13th of 67). By comparison, the Journal of Vascular Surgery (JVS) climbed to a 2021 JIF of 4.860 (up 14% from 2020) and ranks 29th in surgery, whilst the Journal of Endovascular Therapy (JEVT) reached a JIF of 3.089 (down 11%) and ranks 74th.

After the fundamental decision to become a hybrid Journal, the proportion of gold open access articles increased dramatically. It was already one in nine research articles (11%) in 2021 and has already more than doubled in 2022. This has not affected critical appraisal. As in previous years, every accepted research article was scrutinised (and optimised) by a mean of 3.6 reviewers completing 7.5 reviews on average. Similarly, the rejection rate for original research has remained very stable at around 85%, while it decreased slightly to 70% for review articles. The result is a collaborative success for our authors from around the globe, our trusted external expert reviewers, and our dedicated editorial team. Together, they represent this Journal’s most important stakeholder groups and guarantee both the journal's quality and credibility for our readership. We all owe them a big “Thank you”!

As in previous years, five out of 10 papers contributing most to the 2021 EJVES JIF were European Society for Vascular Surgery (ESVS) clinical practice guidelines, re-confirming the success of the core mission of the ESVS and EJVES, to deliver education and practical guidance for the good of all vascular patients. The following guidelines were cited between 36 and 363 times in 2021: The “ESVS 2019 management guidelines for abdominal aorto-iliac aneurysms (AAA)”7; the “Conjoint 2019 Global Vascular Guidelines for chronic limb threatening disease”8; the “ESVS 2020 management guidelines for acute limb ischaemia”; the “ESVS 2020 management guidelines for vascular graft and endograft infections”9; and, last but not least, the “2019 Expert consensus recommendations for the management of aortic pathologies involving the aortic arch” (together with the European Association for Cardio-Thoracic Surgery, EACTS).9

In addition, two prominent papers on the management of AAA (including one meta-analysis of long term RCT outcomes after open vs. endovascular aortic repair, and one systematic review of mycotic aneurysm management); and three on the management of peripheral arterial occlusive disease (PAOD) (including a propensity score matched analysis of survival after use of Paclitaxel coated devices; a trend analysis of comorbidity patterns in PAOD; and a Vascunet Report on international variation and sex disparities in PAOD management) were amongst the most cited papers in 2021.

Scientific publishing is a very dynamic environment. It is necessary to be active and dynamic in order to maintain the position of being the premier journal in the field. One such issue is to keep the papers published easily and globally accessible for scientists and clinicians, without jeopardizing the income stream that is necessary to cover the cost of production. The EJVES has taken the first steps on the track towards open access (OA), when we became a transformative journal. An ever increasing proportion of the papers are being published OA, and simultaneously we are creating an OA fund for the future. The fund is intended to support future researchers who lack the financial resources to pay for publishing their science in the EJVES, when we become an OA journal. It must be emphasised, however, that the high quality standards of the EJVES will not be changed en route to OA! We still aim to publish only the best papers in vascular surgery, but to make them easily accessible to everyone interested in offering their patients evidence based treatment.

The Instructions for Authors (IfA) have been revised multiple times since the journal was created in 1987, but these multiple revisions created a document that was sometimes difficult to understand. We have therefore
performed a complete makeover of the IfA, that was published in June. The structure of the document is completely changed. The first part is named “Before you Begin”. Here the criteria for authorship are explained, as well as other possibilities to acknowledge contributions to the work, including naming collaborators. The normal maximum numbers of authors are defined for different article types. It should be emphasised that the rationale to limit the number of full authors is dual. Every author has joint responsibility for all the content of the paper, a fact that will make all of them accountable in case of scientific misconduct, or other problems. Putting your name under a paper that you have only partial knowledge of how it was created, is a risky business. The second reason is that allowing too many co-authors will devalue the merit given to those who actually performed most of the work. In summary, being serious about authorship, and not allowing courtesy authorship, is a way of showing respect to the true authors of a scientific paper. There are situations, however, when multiple authorship is reasonable and necessary, such as when writing clinical practice guidelines and performing international collaborations.

The following sections of the IfA are: “How to Prepare the Manuscript”, “Submission Process”, and “For those with an Accepted Paper”. We believe that this new structure, the much shortened document, and the content with important practical information, will give substantial help to the authors. Please let us know if you identify inconsistencies or other issues, as we do appreciate feedback.

A new publication format was introduced in 2019, the Research Letter. This is an abbreviated communication which is appropriate, when there is a straightforward and important message. We receive an ever increasing number of submissions in this format. They undergo similar peer review as original research articles and are published in the Correspondence section of the Journal. They can be reviewed and published fast track, if a rapid communication is warranted. Most of them include original research data, that are still not enough to merit a publication as a full length article, but we have also published reports on ongoing trials, mini reviews, and debates in this format. We believe that they are both reader friendly, and more inclusive from the author perspective.

These important editorial developments of the EJVES and the results obtained have ensured an important cultural growth of the European Community of Vascular Surgeons in recent years and have provided a high profile scientific platform in which to meet. With the same philosophy and with the same scientific rigor, the work is being carried out within the whole Society. The commitment of our ESVS particularly materialises in the context of its most important scientific event of the year: the Annual General Meeting (AGM) being held in Rome from 20 to 23 September 2022. The program of the AGM offers Scientific Sessions, Industry Sessions, Academic Workshops, Meetings with Experts and numerous opportunities to meet new technologies which today, and in the future, will help us treat our patients with vascular disease more and more effectively. Above all, the AGM is a fantastic opportunity to bring our European community together again after a long period of physical distance. So many have worked hard to ensure that it can take place in the best possible way despite great obstacles such as the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the economic energy crisis.

The AGM is dedicated to sharing knowledge between different generations of Vascular Surgeons since the core mission of the ESVS includes educating young vascular surgeons and fostering their knowledge and knowhow in the management of vascular disease. Numerous ESVS activities, including the AGM, academy courses, webinars, single issue scientific events, virtual vascular and the scientific journals, have this primary goal that the Presidents are passing from hand to hand with the support of the Executive Committee, the Council, the Committees, all the ESVS members, and in particular the members of the European Vascular Surgeons in Training (EVST). For all involved in vascular care, it is important to keep up with the technological evolution that has characterised our clinical field in recent years. Amongst all exciting progress, we have also witnessed the appearance of new technologies that have quickly disappeared from the market because they have proved ineffective. It is important that our Society has an active role in making its members aware of new technologies that support clinical activities; but, at the same time, the ESVS must also take an active part in the validation process of their usefulness and cost effectiveness to ensure a public benefit. Our mission is to improve vascular health for the public benefit. With this overriding goal it is important to look at new technologies but not to forget what the rich history of Vascular Surgery has taught and offered us in past years. The use of open surgical techniques and ultrasound diagnostics must be included in the training platforms that we offer to our members, in the same way as all the endovascular technological innovation. Therefore, the ESVS Academy Committee offers balanced and comprehensive training activities to all our members.

The ESVS is the Society of, and for, all European Vascular Surgeons. An ambition of the ESVS is to transform this Society into a large umbrella under which all the National Scientific Societies of Vascular Surgery present in Europe can find a place. Under this umbrella, ideally, individual National Societies maintain their identity, but break down unnecessary borders to enable collaboration, training and conjoint research. This challenge is one of the main future objectives of the ESVS, and the “passee-partout” for success will be scientific quality and inclusiveness of the ESVS and both its scientific journals.

REFERENCES
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