

Editorial

Open Access

World Journal of Surgical Oncology: One year of Open Access publishing

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In many parts of the world cancer is the second leading cause of death, with substantial amounts of health care resources allocated for cancer research, patient care, rehabilitation, and education. Because of the rapid growth of Oncology, many new specialties have developed, including 'Surgical Oncology,' which includes not only surgeons but other health professionals whose interests cover areas such as genetics, pathology, nursing, medical imaging, psychiatry and rehabilitation. As we embark on the 21st century, the surgical treatment of the common "solid" cancers still offers the only hope of cure for patients with many of the most commonly occurring cancers in the world today.

Over the past several decades the field of Surgical Oncology has become much more defined, resulting in important contributions to the diagnosis and management of a wide variety of cancers. Of more than 100,000 current Medline references to 'oncology', more than 15% contain the additional reference term 'surgery'.

But still there is a dichotomy in surgical oncology. There has been an almost exponential rate of change in what has been regarded as the "developed" world, which has not been reflected in the changes occurring in the developing countries. Clearly, there are issues of financial resource, availability of staff, structured and continuing education and, of course, the infrastructure to allow these changes and developments to occur. It is important that advances in Surgical Oncological practice should be available to all those involved in the care of the patient with cancer, no

matter where they are in the world. This is particularly important to those practicing where there are great challenges in facilitating these developments, but often there are lesser resources available to fuel these changes.

The *World Journal of Surgical Oncology* came into existence a year ago to provide an additional outlet for publication and retrieval of important new information pertaining to cancer. Already it has become popular: the new journal is the fourth of more than 500,000 listings under 'surgical oncology' in Google – the most widely used internet search engine.

The need

There are few journals focusing on Surgical Oncology. Those that do exist and have been established are available at a subscription that is beyond many, especially in developing and under-developed countries. Moreover, there was no Open Access journal catering for the surgical oncologist. As most of the journals are "print journals" with space constraints, there was a requirement and a demand for a journal whose publication did not have the traditional space-constraints of those currently established and hence can publish larger data sets, color photographs and videos beside being available to as wide a readership as possible. This journal fits these criteria with availability to a global readership and without any restriction in its accessibility. Hence, it was appropriately named as *World Journal of Surgical Oncology*. There is a world-wide representation on the Editorial board, and its global reach due to Open Access offers one of the fastest dissemina-

tions of new knowledge and technical know-how that there is. It makes a significant contribution to the surgical oncological world, truly shrinking us to a new global village. To facilitate rapid publication and to minimize administrative costs, *World Journal of Surgical Oncology* accepts only online submissions.

Open Access

World journal of Surgical Oncology's Open Access policy ensures that its articles become universally accessible online and this ensures the potential for the widest possible dissemination. Furthermore, there are no costs to the reader, only a need for access to the internet which is also rapidly occurring throughout the world. This also means that the authors retain the copyright for their work and can grant anyone the right to reproduce and disseminate their work, with the following caveats; (i) no substantive errors are introduced in the process, (ii) proper attribution of authorship and correct citation details are given, and (iii) that the bibliographic details are not altered. If the article is reproduced or disseminated in part, this must be clearly and unequivocally indicated [1,2].

A copy of the full text of each Open Access article is permanently archived in an online repository separate from the journal. Published articles in *World Journal of Surgical Oncology* are archived in PubMed Central [3], the US National Library of Medicine's full-text repository of life science literature, and also in repositories at the University of Potsdam in Germany [4], at INIST in France [5] and in e-Depot, the National Library of the Netherlands' digital archive of all electronic publications [6]. Open Access also guarantees that the articles are available to researchers desktop any time of the day anywhere [7]. Moreover, there is now the provision in place for interlinking of articles and citations.

Benefits of Open Access

Open Access has four broad benefits for science and the general public. First, as mentioned above is that the authors are assured that their work is disseminated to the widest possible audience, given that there are no barriers to reading their work. This is accentuated by the authors being free to reproduce and distribute their work, for example by placing it on their institution's website. It has been suggested that free online articles are more highly cited because of their easier availability [8]. Second, the information available to researchers will not be limited by their library's budget, and the widespread availability of articles will enhance literature searching [9]. Third, the results of publicly funded research will be accessible to all those who have funded this work, i.e. the taxpayer, and not just those with access to a library with a subscription to a particular journal. As such, Open Access could help to increase public interest in, and support of, research. Note

that this public accessibility may become a legal requirement in the USA if the proposed Public Access to Science Act is made law [10]. Fourth, the economic state of any individual country, good bad or indifferent, will not influence its own scientists' ability to access published articles because the only requirement to gain access to this material is access to the internet [11].

Peer review policy

Peer review is not an optional requirement for research and researchers, it is a necessity. Without peer review, the research literature may be neither reliable nor navigable; quality would be uncontrolled and unfiltered. Furthermore, there may be issues of accountability that would be extremely difficult to understand [7,12]. Therefore, manuscripts submitted to the *World Journal of Surgical Oncology* undergo a stringent peer review process. Each submitted manuscript is initially reviewed by the Editorial board and if it is considered suitable for further consideration for publication, it is then sent to at least two appropriate reviewers. Reviewers are selected from the journal's database which has been constructed from experts who have been identified by their publications in a particular field from a detailed search of Medline. This electronic review process is another facet which facilitates rapid publication, with attempts being made to ensure that the peer review process is completed within 3–4 weeks of the online submission of a manuscript to the journal [13]. We are working towards developing a web-based peer review system as this will improve further the review process and thus help in our constant desire to ensure that the time from submission to the publication of an article is kept to the minimum possible.

The first year

The journal received 52 manuscripts in its first year of which 30 were accepted and published. The acceptance rate at present is 57.6%. On average 19 days were necessary to allow completion of the review process (range 1 to 60 days). It was pleasing to note that the mean time from submission to publication of an article was 3 months, which is excellent when compared with most "print" journals. Where delays occurred, these were mainly due to the time taken for authors to revise their manuscripts in the light of editorial and/or reviewers' comments. Many of the revisions that were requested of authors were simply to format the article to suit the journal style, in particular the reference section of the manuscript. Initially very few authors followed the instructions given for them with reference to the formatting style for the references! We would like to emphasise that it is possible to further shorten the times for submission to publication if all the submitted manuscripts adhere to the submission guidelines which are clearly given in the journal. If not, then delays in publication are, unfortunately, inevitable. All articles are pub-

lished online immediately upon acceptance (after peer review) and sent to PubMed for referencing immediately.

We would like to thank all our contributors, reviewers, and the Editorial board members who have all put substantial time and effort into establishing this journal. We also sincerely hope that everyone will offer the same level of support in the future as this will help us fulfil the goals of Open Access, faster publication, a greater reach and dissemination of knowledge beyond the established and conventional boundaries. Currently the journal is witnessing an average of 195 sessions per day (a 'Session' is defined as a series of "clicks" on the site by an individual visitor during a specific period of time. A Session is initiated when the visitor arrives at the site, and it ends when the browser is closed or there is a period of inactivity), over 450 page views per day ('Pageview' is a request to the web server by a visitor's browser for any web page) resulting in over 300000 hits a day (a 'Hit' is any successful request to the web server from a visitor's browser). The article by Varghese et al [14] is the most accessed article and it has been accessed nearly 4000 times, closely followed by article by Overhaus et al [15] (> 3500 access) and the article of Kanthan and Trokian [16](> 3400 access).

We thank all our contributors, reviewers, and Editorial board members and sincerely hope that we will keep getting the same level of help and support in future. This will help us fulfil the goal of Open Access, i.e. faster publication, greater reach and dissemination of knowledge, "Knowledge beyond boundaries".

Competing interests

MP is the editor-in-chief, SDH is section editor and ABL is research editor of *World Journal of Surgical Oncology*, published by Open Access publishers Biomedcentral, which depends on Open Access model for substantial portion of its revenue.

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