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EDITORIAL

CHANGES FOR JEPonline FOR 2004

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The year of 2003 was one of tremendous growth for JEPonline. The number of publications has increased consistently since the founding of the journal in 1998 (Figure 1). However, we currently have more than 30 manuscripts in review for 2004, a total that is similar to the entire 2003 year, and it is only February. Many of these manuscripts were submitted in the second half of 2003 and totally stressed the current procedures for manuscript submission, processing and review.

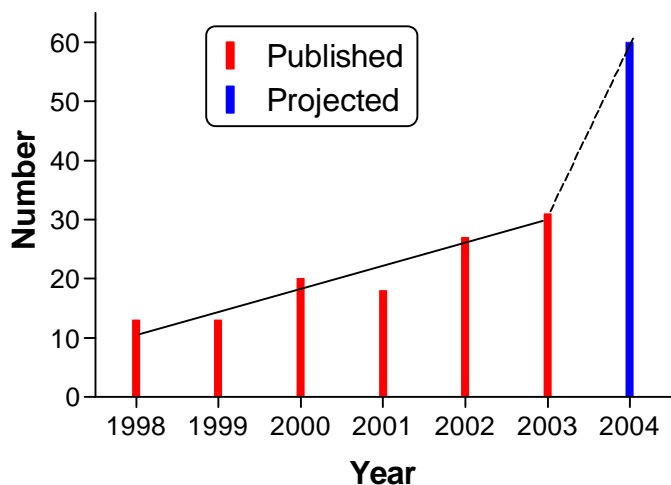


Figure 1. The number of manuscripts published in JEPonline, by year, since 1998. The total for 2004 is a projection based on current rates of submission and the present number of manuscripts in review.

Until recently, I had been organizing the reviews, processing reviewer comments, reviewing many manuscripts myself, and completing the final proof reading and formatting of manuscripts for publication. With the consistent and recent explosive growth of the journal came the realization that the job of editor-in-chief, at least as I had been doing it, was now too big for me to handle alone and change was in order.

In January 2004, Tommy Boone, the managing editor of all ASEP journals, and the remainder of the ASEP Board of Directors, supported my plea for ASEP to provide funding to support an Assistant Editor for JEPonline. Sharon E. Griffin Ph.D. (Figure 2) was hired to assist me in my duties, and wherever possible, improve the procedures by which JEPonline

functions administratively. Sharon came to us excellently qualified, with a Masters and Ph.D. degree in Exercise Science/Physiology, as well as a second Masters Degree in Nutrition.

Sharon and I have already made considerable efforts at reorganizing how manuscripts are administered in all facets of the peer review process. Our plan is to have new submission guidelines posted on the ASEP website later this month, and detailed in another editorial in the April issue.



Figure 2. Sharon E. Griffin, Ph.D.

NEW PROCEDURES FOR JEPonline

I will provide some general examples for how the journal will change in 2004. First of all, the journal will now be published bi-monthly, with issues near the first of the month for February, April, June, August, October and November. If submissions continue to increase through 2004, a decision will be made later this year if the journal is to publish monthly for 2005. Such a decision is highly likely, as we project approximately 10-15 manuscripts/issue for 2004 for the six issues, which is a number that represents a realistic maximum for the current staff (2 part-time professionals).

Another important change will be the development of a Peer Review Board. It is my experience over the last 6 years that external peer review based on contacting and recruiting “experts” is a process that is far too slow and uncontrollable. Furthermore, as I expressed in a past editorial on the Peer Review Process (1), there is considerable discontent for how the peer review process works for many journals within many fields of inquiry. The issue at question is not peer review, which scientists and academics alike are unanimous in supporting. The issue is how to conduct peer review so that all the negatives are minimized. By negatives, I mean the potential for reviewer and editorial bias in decisions of manuscript acceptance. Such bias can take many forms, with the example of reviewers protecting their own interests and past publication record perhaps the most unethical and prolific negative. **JEPonline** is to have a multitude of reviewers on the Board who are recognized for their knowledge of exercise physiology, and specific sub-topics. More importantly, each Board member will have agreed to the conditions of the ethical and professional responsibility of a peer reviewer.

The **JEPonline** Peer Review Board will be responsible for providing a second review, supplementing the editorial review, to all manuscripts. The review process will work by having Sharon contact pertinent members of the Board for specific manuscripts, and requesting feedback of availability to complete a review within 2 weeks. Positive replies from a Board member will result in an email of the manuscript, and the expectation that the review will be done within the 2-week limit. During this time, the manuscript will be reviewed by one of the editorial staff. The result will be a first round review process that is complete within a 5-week period (2 week pre-processing, 2 weeks review, 1 week post-processing).

Finally, and as known by those that have recently published in **JEPonline**, there will be a new process for returning reviewer comments. In today’s electronic age, it does not make any sense to adhere to the traditional separate reviewer replies format, with changes identified by page and line, requiring authors to respond separately to changes, and once again stating page and line numbers of the revised document that contain changes. Review changes and comments will be embedded in the submitted and pre-formatted manuscript. Different text colors will identify changes and comments, and new content in revised versions will also be identified by text color. This process is designed to speed the review and reviewer reply processes, and expedite editorial work in finally formatting manuscripts for publication.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I think that these explanations of the major change for **JEPonline** will provide enough insight to appreciate the efforts that ASEP is making to support publication of research and commentary manuscripts within the profession of exercise physiology. Despite these changes, all fellow exercise physiologists need to know that **JEPonline** will not change in its attitude towards submissions and authors. All authors will be treated as fellow professionals, and be regarded as experts in the topic of their manuscript. Manuscripts with deficiencies will be

regarded as in need of assistance, and seldom will there be a first round total rejection. **JEPonline** exists to serve exercise physiologists in publishing quality research. If manuscripts are viewed to be deficient by reviewers and the editorial staff, and cannot be published in their current form, the authors will be given assistance in how to improve their manuscripts to increase the likelihood for eventual publication. There is no mentality at **JEPonline** for developing, enforcing, and boasting a large rejection rate. Such rejection rates are not indicative of journal quality or prestige. Rather, rejection rates are open admissions of the increased potential for unethical practice in the review process where the journal and its peer review process are open to bias, inconsistencies, and the unfair treatment of those who submit their manuscripts for peer review. The rejection process is always subjective, and research proves that peer review is just as likely to be incorrect as it is correct (1).

REFERENCES

1) Robergs RA. A critical review of peer review: The need to scrutinize the “Gatekeepers” of research in exercise physiology. **JEPonline**. 2003;6(2):i-xiii.