

## *Journal of Gastroenterology* in the era of globalization

Kentaro Sugano

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The *Journal of Gastroenterology* (JG) is the flagship journal of three periodicals that the *Japanese Society of Gastroenterology* (JSGE) publishes, the other two being the *Journal of the Japanese Society of Gastroenterology* (JJSJG), published in Japanese, and the *Clinical Journal of Gastroenterology* (CJG), an internet journal focusing on case reports. During my service on the editorial board of JG, the name of the journal was changed from *Gastroenterologia Japonica* to the current one, hoping to attract more international interest (Fig. 1). Indeed, during the last 20 years, an increasing number of manuscripts have been submitted to this journal, as the impact factor (IF) of this journal has jumped up from less than 0.5 to over 4.0 at present, which of course is positively correlated. However, JG still stands far behind other major journals such as *Gastroenterology* [the official journal of the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA)], and *Gut* [the official journal of the British Society of Gastroenterology (BSG)] in the ranking of gastrointestinal journals (Table 1).

Although impact factor is only one of the measures for evaluating the value of the journals, I think there are many points that our journal can learn from these top medical journals' policies to improve further our performance necessary to grow into a truly international journal.

First of all, it is important to invite more editorial board members from abroad, in particular from Asian–Pacific countries where we are located. Currently, among 67 editorial board members (including editor-in-chief and associate editors) of JG, only 9 are from outside Japan and none

are from Asia, which can be interpreted as that the journal is heavily skewed to domestic orientation. In contrast, both AGA and BSG are approaching Asian countries to strengthen the relation to these countries, particularly China, as they recognize the importance of papers from these countries that are growing rapidly and share considerable portion of their journals. By appointing productive young gastroenterologists from Asian countries, we can expect more high-quality papers from them. We can also host editorial board meetings at international conventions such as APDW or JDDW to promote mutual communications by directly hearing their comments and proposals. As I already proposed this idea to Professor Mamoru Watanabe, the editorial director of JG, I hope it will be realized in the near future.

Second, we need to enhance further the visibility of JG. If you look at what *Gastroenterology* and *Gut* are doing, you will notice that JG has been less active with advertising as these two. When I was the president of JSGE, I prompted the JSGE office to send the contents of JG to all JSGE members through e-mail. This journal alert has since been continued. However, many Japanese members may not look at the notice of contents written in English. As this kind of attitude (“English allergy”) of many Japanese members was expected, I also recommended that editorial members write a short summary of each article in Japanese, so that Japanese readers can grasp the contents published in JG. *Gastric Cancer*, a journal dedicated to articles related to gastric cancer and now ranked higher than JG, initiated this in an effort to attract the attention of Japanese readers during my period as associated editor of the journal. There are also other ways to increase awareness whenever a new issue is published, for example, by providing commentaries on the articles from editorial members or other experts, such as senior editorial board members, to highlight the

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K. Sugano (✉)  
Jichi Medical University, 3311-1 Yakushiji, Shimotsuke,  
Tochigi 329-0498, Japan  
e-mail: sugano@jichi.ac.jp



**Fig. 1** Changes in cover pages of the *Journal of Gastroenterology*

**Table 1** Journal citation ranking in Gastroenterology in 2013 (data from Thomson Reuters)

Journal	Total IF for 2013	IF without self cites	Self cites number and rates (%)	Number of paper published in 2011 + 2012
<i>Gastroenterology</i>	13.926	13.390	349 (3)	375 + 276 = 651
<i>Gut</i>	13.319	12.950	141 (2)	192 + 190 = 382
<i>Hepatology</i>	11.190	10.562	506 (5)	387 + 419 = 806
<i>J Hepatol</i>	10.401	9.688	457 (6)	305 + 336 = 641
<i>Am J Gastroenterol</i>	9.213	8.571	265 (6)	225 + 188 = 413
<i>Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol</i>	6.534	6.093	137 (6)	132 + 179 = 311
<i>Aliment Pharmacol Ther</i>	5.478	4.947	271 (9)	268 + 242 = 510
<i>Inflamm Bowel Dis</i>	5.475	4.683	420 (14)	269 + 261 = 530
<i>Endoscopy</i>	5.196	4.165	331 (19)	177 + 144 = 321
<i>Gastrointest Endosc</i>	4.900	4.225	412 (13)	313 + 297 = 610
<i>Gastric Cancer</i>	4.828	4.430	51 (8)	54 + 74 = 128
<i>Liver Int</i>	4.412	4.245	76 (4)	193 + 183 = 376
<i>J Gastroenterol</i>	4.020	3.824	60 (4)	166 + 140 = 306
<i>Liver Transplant</i>	3.793	3.098	249 (18)	188 + 170 = 358
<i>American J Physiol Gastrointest Liver Physiol</i>	3.737	3.524	110 (5)	231 + 286 = 517
<i>J Gastroenterol Hepatol</i>	3.627	3.496	76 (3)	292 + 285 = 577
<i>J Crohns Colitis</i>	3.562	3.226	76 (9)	93 + 133 = 226

Data from Web of Science (Thomson Reuters). Review journals were excluded from this table, journals with IF over 3.5 were shown

value of new findings. Such commentaries and editorials are unfortunately often missing in issues of JG, and although they can be counted as denominators, and thus not contributing much to the IF, it is one of the way we appreciate the original articles. We can also use JSSGE (or CJG) to provide such commentaries to alert Japanese readers that significant new findings are published in JG, which certainly serves to increase awareness of a paper published in JG and will contribute to increase the citation. We can also interview authors who publish excellent works with short commentary from the editorial board members which can be sent through e-mail or Podcast together with putting the video clips in our home page. The highest ranking medical journal, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, uses such a strategy, which, I think, is very effective in promoting the reader's attention. The journal *Gut* also uses social networking service (SNS) methodology to increase the awareness of their articles as dissemination of information through SNS is deemed vitally important in sales of many commodities. Publishers also send information to readers every time a new issue is published. As a member of AGA, I regularly receive two journal alerts, *Gastroenterology* and *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology* from Elsevier. Does Springer provide this kind of service? Another approach to attract attention to JG is to have good illustrations. For example, the journal *Cell*, a top-notch basic science journal, created a very attractive home page showing each of their article titles accompanied by a single illustration that captures the most important findings or concepts of the article, which will help attract attention of the readers.

As mentioned earlier, excellent commentaries and editorials are one way to appreciate authors' efforts to publish their work to JG, but they also serve readers to understand better the value or implications of the new findings and may motivate researchers to conduct further research.

However, these commentaries and editorials should have figures to draw attention of readers. Given the importance of the illustrations in commentaries, editorials, and review articles, we need seriously to consider hiring professional medical illustrators to depict such figures for JG. Again, if you look at *Gastroenterology*, illustrations provided in the review articles and commentaries are not only educational, but also quite artistic, which can be very useful for us when showing them in our lectures and seminars, which in turn would merit the journal for promoting the articles. I am sure that there can be many other ways to increase the visibility of JG, but we should not take this kind of effort as commercialism, but rather consider it as a way to express our sincere appreciation to authors who take great efforts to publish their articles in JG.

Third, we need to increase the number of articles published in JG. Although the quality of the paper is important, the impact of the total number of articles also matters as it may entice a wider readership with different expertise to explore the contents of JG. We may consider that the value of increasing the number of articles is like increasing our stock of knowledge data base. We should invite experts from around the world to write commentaries, review articles, meta-analyses, and of course ask them to submit their original works. In this regard, we can ask distinguished guests invited to our annual meetings to write their lectures. I also planned that JSGE guidelines (now 10) are published in JG. Only one was published so far, but I think these guidelines will come out in the following years, which will definitely contribute to the IF for JG. Furthermore, we may invite a study group for writing new diagnostic rules whenever they are created or revised as articles for JG. It is also possible that JG can support organizing consensus meetings under the condition of publishing the report in JG.

As better service for authors and reviewers are also important, editorial members and publishers should always be mindful of how to improve the awkward process of submission and reviewing to a more user-friendly one. The decision process should be shortened to 2 weeks as most of the major journals do. Replace slow or inefficient reviewers

to accelerate the reviewing process every year. It is also very important to publish the submission as fast as possible, and in a printed form once it is accepted. If you look at the accepted date and the month of publication, you notice that the intervals are almost 1 year in JG (as of November 2014), which is unacceptably slow to publish in print. Although this frustration of slow publication is slightly eased by the electronic publication (e-pub) system, an article accepted 1 year before will compromise the freshness and impact of the latest issue. Major journals are trying hard to publish an accepted article within 3 months, which should be the goal for JG as well.

Lastly, we should increase open-access articles by lifting sanctions for those of high impact, which is currently partially working. JSGE are actually giving research funds to young investigators (3 million yen each to 5 applicants), but surprisingly very few of those who receive the JSGE research award presented their data to the JSGE meeting or publish their study results to JG. This is surprising and shameful. We should stipulate that JSGE research awardees are obliged to present their study results in JSGE meetings and to report in JG either as original articles or reviews with open-access benefit.

One might ask for what purpose are all these promotional proposals for JG? The purpose of the journal is to provide high quality investigations in the field of gastroenterology, thereby promoting health and welfare of the people in the world. To achieve this goal, it would be beneficial that the articles published in JG are attractive, enriched in new findings with high impact, and distributed as fast as possible. It should be noted that increase in visibility of the journal is an integral part to achieve the purpose, thus it is essential to increase our activities for reach-out strategies. This is also a way to express our appreciation for the authors that published their articles in JG, which will be rewarding for them too. Through these efforts, JG will certainly grow into a major international journal of gastroenterology, but we should not forget our mission to be a voice for Japan and Asian countries where we are located.