

Proposal of a new editorial policy for *EHPM* and *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi*

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As a result of the patient efforts of ex-editor-in-chief Prof. H. Yuasa and the strong support of ex-president Prof. K. Morimoto, our journal *Environmental Health and Preventive Medicine (EHPM)* is currently being published by one of the more well-known international publishers, Springer Verlag. This decision to form a formal working relationship with Springer Verlag was undertaken with the aim of promoting the scientific values of our journal, *EHPM*, in the international scientific community. To improve our desire for internationalization, our Society, with the full support of the elected president of the Japanese Society for Hygiene, Prof. H. Sato, has opened a China office, which is chaired by Prof. Peiyu Wang, Peking University. *EHPM* is about to enter a new phase in its history.

We, A. Koizumi (Kyoto University) and T. Otsuki (Kawasaki Medical School) will succeed to the position of editor-in-chief of *EHPM* and *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi*, respectively. Other new members of the Editorial Board are Prof. K. Aoki (Ryukyu University), Prof. M. Ichiba (Saga University), Prof. H. Inadera (Toyama University), Prof. K. Ogino (Okayama University), Dr. Y. Saijo (Asahikawa Medical College), Prof. T. Takeuchi (Kagoshima University), Prof. T. Nakayama (Kyoto University), Dr. Y. Nishiwaki (Keio University), Dr. K. Harada (Kyoto University), and

Prof. C. Watanabe (University of Tokyo). We will do our best to develop as a team and to extend the group dynamics of our society by exploring new horizons for *EHPM* and *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi*.

Japanese universities are increasingly being confronted with a heavy economic burden in their desire to purchase journals, particularly since the numbers of journals are increasing: PubMed central listed more than 5000 journals as of April 2009. *Nature*, *Science*, *Cell*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Lancet* and *JAMA*, which are very prestigious journals, often reject even excellent papers due to the limitation of space and scope of the journals. These journals have played key roles in reporting new findings to a broad readership. The growth of science has been accompanied by a growth in the number of journals. Journals compete with each other and are ranked by impact factors; scientists are evaluated by cumulative impact factors and cumulative numbers of cited works.

To a large extent, the status of a journal is almost always a reflection of the quality of the papers it publishes and the impact factors. Consequently, the promotion of those studies published in a journal is in proportion to the reputation of that journal. There are, however, a number of caveats. Journals cost a lot of money to maintain. There is also always a page limitation as even a large, well-known journal, such as *JBC*, cannot exceed 40,000 pages annually. To cope with such limitations, a new online journal, *PLoS (Public Library of Science)*, has been created. This journal is published by NPO, which was founded by Dr. Harold Vermus and his colleagues. It has several innovative policies: (1) open access; (2) editorial performance at every level is transparent and accessible to the scientific community and public; (3) it addresses educational value; (4) it is committed to a fair, rigorous editorial process; (5) scientific quality and importance are the sole

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considerations in publication decisions without pragmatic considerations focusing on publishing high-impact research; (6) it intends to expand its scope as rapidly as practically possible to provide a vehicle for publication of other valuable scientific or scholarly articles.

EHPM and *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi* may learn a number of core values from *PLoS*. Policies (3), (5) and (6) are of particular importance. In terms of policies (3) and (5), it may be generally difficult to evaluate the scientific quality and importance of an article and also to maintain a good balance between educational function and scientific quality. Policy (6) is also essential: good journals publish large-scale studies which are supported by large grants, with less attention given to cottage industry science. Cottage industry scientists are increasingly having the feeling that it is difficult to find the appropriate journals for publishing their studies, even when they are scientifically sound. Due to complex factors, including time trends, and cultural, social, and economic backgrounds, we cannot simply transplant *PLoS* policies into *EHPM* and *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi*. However, we may learn something from these principles. If a study has a sound scientific basis and the article is well written, it may stimulate other studies in a self-directive way. In modern societies such as ours, we should be sensitive to ethical aspects as professional scientists. Finally, since *EHPM* and *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi* is the official journal of the Japanese Society for Hygiene, it has to be a scientific vehicle for all members.

The new editorial group, including those of the China office, would like to address the following core points for a new editorial policy:

1. *Scientific formalism*: All submitted papers should be based on sound science. We address the scientific formalism of the paper as much as its quality and importance and more than its impact.
2. *Compliance of ethical guidelines for scientists and research*: Authors should not follow the standard ethical codes for study participants but ensure that the study also conforms with research ethics.
3. *Educational function*: The principle of “peer review” originally meant mutual learning. However, reviewers often tend to have the illusion of superiority or of being a “big cheese”. Such an illusion, if any, should be completely discarded, and the mutual learning principle of “peer review” should be recalled. This step will encourage young researchers to submit challenging works to *EHPM* and *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi*.
4. *EHPM* and *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi*: Public health issues are often linked to the social system and their traditional backgrounds. *EHPM* is more oriented to international issues while *Eiseigaku Zasshi* is more oriented to domestic issues. In addition, since *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi* is written in Japanese, it is more reader friendly for Japanese scientists than *EHPM*. As such, *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi* may play a more important role in terms of educational function than *EHPM*. We, however, should never forget the value of *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi*, since it has been cited by PubMed for many years. Both journals will be promoted equally.

We believe that those new policies will facilitate the rapid growth of *EHPM* and *Nippon Eiseigaku Zasshi*.