Editorial

C.	Claude	Kordon
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After two and a half years in office, the editorial team of *Neuroendocrinology* is pleased to provide readers of the journal with a brief summary of its projects and the publication record.

We are now considering full electronic processing of manuscripts in order to speed up evaluation time, especially for manuscripts which contain no morphological illustrations. We are also attempting to take further advantage of electronic communication. All scientific periodicals are faced today with an exponential inflation of data. Publication no longer serves the exclusive purpose of communications; it also plays an increasing role in evaluation – of grants, institutions or personal careers. This tends to generate manuscripts with a limited potential readership. Journals are probably neither adapted nor cost effective to disseminate fragmentary data primarily intended for grant evaluation. New publication procedures are emerging; they will take more advantage of computers and data banks, and progressively reserve the printed form to more elaborate, consistent data involving global perspectives. Although not easy to achieve, because it departs from current habits we were trained to follow, such developments cannot be avoided; the example of other scientific communities, such as that of physicists, shows that it is not impossible. In 1996, *Neuroendocrinology* will open a WWW Newsgroup and initiate a consultation on new approaches to publication policies.

The journal has now partly achieved its objective of improving the quality and diversifying the content of *Neuroendocrinology*. Manuscripts addressing aspects of physiology are still forming the largest group of submissions (42% of all manuscripts), while the journal also remains a reference for neuroanatomy and cytology. Ad-

ditional approaches include cell biology and cell pharmacology (15%), molecular neuroendocrinology (12%) and neuroimmunology (8%). Neuroendocrine correlates of behaviour account for only 3% of proposed papers. Clinical neuroendocrinology represents a steady share of submissions with 9% of manuscripts.

Out of approximately 400 papers analyzed, an almost even proportion comes from North America and Europe (40% each), with the remaining fifth coming mostly from Japan. The number of articles submitted decreased slightly in 1995 relative to 1994, all contributing countries being equally affected. This may be due to increased competition and publication space in the field, as well as awareness of higher rejection rates, which may have deterred some authors from submitting their papers.

Rejection rate has indeed increased to 44%, while requests for major revisions or additional experiments totalled 28%. The rejection rate is lowest for manuscripts dealing with neuroanatomy and neuroimmunology, and highest in cell biology and physiology (in the latter case mainly because too many submissions are confirmatory or too preliminary). Seventy-five percent of manuscripts sent back for major revision are returned after substantial improvement and end up being published.

The average interval between submission and publication is now down to about 6-7 months (from 9.4 in early 1994) for manuscripts accepted after initial evaluation or minor revisions. In 1995, one third of manuscripts entering that category were published in less than 7 months, and two thirds in less than 8. Submissions sent back for major revisions usually take 2 more months.

Some readers have expressed concern that the referee-ing process may vary from one editor to the other, or may

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be organized on a regional basis. In reality, all editor assignments are decided by the head office, irrespective of the origin of the paper, and great attention is given to respect common criteria and promote multinational evaluation of each manuscript. The function of the receiving editors (in North America and Japan) is completely separate from that of the associate editors. Statistics show that rejection rates of all editors are homogeneous.

Decisions to reject papers are always difficult. From a technical point of view, the quality of manuscripts we receive may be quite good. We are aware that in an increasingly competitive context authors using reliable strategies are sometimes unhappy with us and feel some of our decisions are unfair. Of course, editors also make mistakes (in some cases we have agreed to reconsider our decisions, and eventually, but rarely, reversed them). Rigor, however, is the price we have to pay if we want the journal to interest a wider readership.

The new 'Rapid reject' procedure introduced in 1995 has been applied so far to 15 manuscripts. Its purpose is to inform authors very rapidly (less than 2 weeks) that, in the opinion of two editors, their manuscript does not fulfill the journal's publication criteria and is thus unlikely to be accepted. Authors may appeal that decision and request a normal evaluation procedure. Two authors used the appeal procedure, and one manuscript was finally accepted.

The 'Rapid communication' procedure, reintroduced at the suggestion of editorial board members, has not proven very successful so far. It was requested only once in 1995, for a manuscript which required revision and was thus rejected, since the procedure is designed as a 'take or leave' process.

The editors and the publisher of *Neuroendocrinology* are pleased to thank authors for a fruitful collaboration and wish them and readers of the journal a pleasant New Year.

2

Neuroendocrinology 1996;63:1-2

Kordon