Editorial

The Publisher, the Editors and the Editorial Office of *Neuroendocrinology* all send our readers their best wishes for 2003.

Although the average impact factor has been 2.69 over the last 6 years, the latest figure published in 2001 (2.151) was lower than in previous years. In fact, our impact factor has fluctuated between 2.15 and 3.15 in that period with a standard deviation corresponding to 15% of the mean, a not uncommon figure among comparable journals. For instance the data is 2.02 ± 0.78 for *Menopause*, 2.97 ± 0.38 for *Human Reproduction*, and 4.37 ± 0.46 for *J. Neurochem*, with respective SDs of 39%, 13% and 10% of the mean, some journals showing even greater fluctuations (21.5% of the mean for *Neuron* and 44.8% for *Neuroimage*). This reflects the fact that a single, highly quoted paper can easily increase the impact factor by about half a point (this happened for instance to *Neuroendocrinology* in 1999 with an article quoted 41 times).

In the field of neuroendocrinology, increased competition by newly created journals in closely related fields may favor dispersion of good papers, and thus act negatively on our own impact. A relatively long delay in getting the journal on the web has been another handicap (in this respect, learned societies in the discipline have now been offered quite cheap on-line services). We have also observed a downward trend in submissions addressing physiological issues, a possible consequence of the higher amount of work per publishable paper and an increasing difficulty in obtaining grants in that discipline. In order to better understand the reasons behind fluctuations in the impact factor, we analyzed the relative impact (average number of citations) by subfield of the articles published in *Neuroendocrinology* in 1999:

Subfield	Number of articles	Average citations
Neuroanatomy	3	11.0
Leptin, food intake	14	10.2
Comparative NE	6	6.7
Cellular NE	37	6.5
Physiology	24	6.4
Clinical NE	7	4.9
Molecular NE	7	4.7
Total	105	6.9

The data show that our best quoted papers address issues of Neuroanatomy and Food Intake Regulation. Physiological and Cellular Approaches come close to the average citations, whereas Clinical and Molecular Neuroendocrinology is lowest, possibly because the top articles in those subfields tend to be submitted primarily to journals specializing in clinical or molecular data.

The average number of citations shown here is higher than the impact factor, because it includes all citations up to the end of 2002 (as opposed to 1999 and 2000 citations only used to calculate the regular impact factor). Interestingly, many of the best quoted papers obtain their highest citation counts during their 3rd year, an observation which seems to be valid for all major journals (the best papers receive about half of their total quotes during years 2 and 3 after publication, instead of years 1 and 2 used for calculation of the impact factor).

We still strongly feel the best editorial policy for *Neuroendocrinology* involves a rapid but critical evaluation process, which remains the best guarantee of the quality we offer our readership!

Claude Kordon