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The present and future perspectives of *Modern Rheumatology*

Modern Rheumatology was published at first as the *Japanese Journal of Rheumatology*, the English version of the official journal of the Japan College of Rheumatology (JCR), in 1986. In 2000 (Vol. 10 (1)), the journal changed its name to *Modern Rheumatology* and now periodically publishes six issues each year. About 15 articles are published in each issue including review articles, original articles, case reports, rapid communications, and letters on research pertinent to rheumatology and associated areas such as pathology, physiology, clinical immunology, microbiology, biochemistry, experimental animal models, and pharmacology.

Modern Rheumatology is the only English journal of rheumatology in Japan and the only official journal of the JCR since the official journal in the Japanese language (*Ryumachi*) ceased publication in 2003. There are very few periodically published English journals of rheumatology in Asia. Only *APLAR Journal of Rheumatology* and *Indian Journal of Rheumatology* can be found in Asian countries alongside *Modern Rheumatology*. Moreover, none of these journals are accepted in MEDLINE/PubMed/Index Medicus or have impact factors. In such a situation, JCR and *Modern Rheumatology* have attempted various endeavors for the promotion and development of rheumatology in Japan and Asia.

From April 2005, the post of Editor-in-Chief of *Modern Rheumatology* was taken over by Tsuneyo Mimori from Nobuyuki Miyasaka. In this editorial, I would like to discuss the present status and future plans of *Modern Rheumatology*.

Publication on MEDLINE/PubMed of *Modern Rheumatology*

The biggest concern of *Modern Rheumatology* is to be accepted for publication in MEDLINE/PubMed and to obtain

an impact factor. It is imperative that *Modern Rheumatology* should become known worldwide and promote submission of more articles of excellence.

Modern Rheumatology has applied to the National Library of Medicine for publication in MEDLINE/PubMed. The previous review of *Modern Rheumatology* by the National Library of Medicine was done in February 2004, but the overall rating did not reach the level of acceptance by a very small margin. In that review, the quality of the journal (scientific merit, editorial work, and production qualities) was evaluated as high, but the importance (especially for educators, administrators, allied health professionals, students, and policy makers) was not considered high enough. Therefore, we have emphasized and encouraged the publication of articles with a high impact in education, administration, and policy making, which we believe should be disseminated from Japan to the world at large. These include articles related to diagnostic criteria, guidelines, educational reviews, and clinical trials. We have just re-submitted *Modern Rheumatology* to the National Library of Medicine for publication in MEDLINE/PubMed, sending six issues of volume 15 published in 2005, and are waiting for the final review.

Disseminating *Modern Rheumatology* to overseas countries

The present situation is that submission numbers from foreign countries to *Modern Rheumatology* have not been very large. To encourage submissions from abroad, JCR is obliged to allow submission of articles from foreign contributors who receive the JCR international scholarship awards and present their abstracts at the annual meeting of JCR. The Editorial Board also invites the writing of review articles by speakers at the International Rheumatology Symposium of JCR and occasionally by world-famous rheumatologists.

We have an electronic edition of the journal available online. Members of JCR and subscribers of *Modern*

Rheumatology are given IDs and passwords and can read full papers from the web site of the publisher.¹ Nonmembers and nonsubscribers can read abstracts of the journal and obtain Instructions to Authors by accessing the publisher's website or the home page of JCR.²

Dissemination of information from Japan to the world

Modern Rheumatology has an important role in spreading original and unique information in rheumatology from Japan to the world. One example would be the unexpected complication of interstitial pneumonia in Japanese patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) who received leflunomide, a new immunosuppressive antirheumatic drug. Leflunomide was first approved in 1999 in the United States and has been used worldwide. In Japan, leflunomide was approved for use in RA patients from September 2003. Although the overall incidence of side effects of leflunomide is relatively high, interstitial pneumonia as a side effect has been very rare (0.02%) in clinical trials and post-marketing surveys conducted in outside of Japan. However, as soon as leflunomide was used in RA patients in Japan, the development of severe interstitial pneumonia was reported in one patient after another. Fortunately, because all of the first 3000 leflunomide users were obliged to register and be followed up when leflunomide was approved for sale in Japan, the detailed situation of patients with interstitial pneumonia has been analyzed. From September 2003 to December 2005, a total of 5770 RA patients received leflunomide of whom 81 (1.4%) developed interstitial pneumonia.³ This complication can be fatal, and 27 patients died (including three cases of leflunomide-unrelated death). The article by Sakai et al. describes and discusses the detailed imaging characteristics in such leflunomide-induced interstitial pneumonia in Japanese patients with RA that has not been recognized in Western countries.⁴ Introducing such information internationally is one of the important roles of the journal.

Review system of *Modern Rheumatology*

Electronic submission of manuscripts to *Modern Rheumatology* is recommended, and the peer-review process is done

online. Submitted papers, including review articles, are subject to peer review by at least two referees and the editors. We have more than 400 reviewers who are specialists in the fields of rheumatology, orthopedic surgery, pediatrics, experimental pathology, immunology, and molecular biology. If the two referees' judgments are not in agreement, a third referee is assigned. The Editorial Board is responsible for the acceptance, rejection, and order of publication of papers. The overall acceptance rate of manuscripts in *Modern Rheumatology* is currently 60.6%.

To accelerate the peer-review process and publication schedule, we are considering the introduction of the transmitting editor system in the near future. In this system, several transmitting editors will be assigned in Japan and in other countries, and authors will send their manuscripts directly to one of the transmitting editors. Editors are responsible for nomination of reviewers and for deciding on acceptance, revision, or rejection of the submitted manuscripts. The Editorial Board complies with the final decision of the transmitting editors. However, the effective management of this system needs the worldwide acknowledgment of *Modern Rheumatology*. Therefore, the actual introduction of this system will take place after *Modern Rheumatology* is published in MEDLINE/PubMed and obtains an impact factor.

The values of scientific journals are dependent on how many scientifically excellent papers can be submitted and published. For this purpose, the impartial and rapid review system is imperative, and the ability of referees to review articles will also be judged.

References

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