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Journal of extracellular vesicles: the seven year itch!

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These are exciting and transitional times for the International Society of Extracellular Vesicles (ISEV) and its journal, the Journal of Extracellular Vesicles (JEV). On 1 August 2019, the authors of this Editorial have seen the end of seven years of hard but rewarding work as Editors in Chief for the Journal, which they have now handed over to Dr. Jan Lötvall, as the new Editor in Chief of JEV.

In 2012, when a group of academic scientists lead by Jan Lötvall decided to create the International Society for Extracellular Vesicles (ISEV), the idea of creating a journal for the society was immediately discussed. Although some of us were not really supportive of this idea, the most enthusiastic members of the ISEV interim board convinced the others, and gathered the required energy to find an experienced and reliable publisher: the Swedish company Co-Action. As President of the interim ISEV board, Jan Lötvall acted as interim Editor-in-Chief; he convinced renowned extracellular vesicle (EV) scientists to submit articles to the not-yet-born journal, with the first ongoing volume of the Journal released on 15 April 2012 (in time for the first ISEV annual meeting). After this successful launch, the ISEV board created a three-headed Editor-in-Chief board for the journal, with one member of each major chapter of ISEV: Europe, Americas and Asia-Pacific.

For us, it was the beginning of an exciting adventure, in which we immediately benefited from the strong support of the EV community. In particular, the first call for editorial board members received almost 70 applications, from which we selected 12 Associate Editors, and renewals and expansion of the Associate Editorial board in 2015 and 2018 received the same success. The former and current 21 Associate Editors all showed strong involvement in their work for the journal, not hesitating to ask for multiple rounds of revisions to reach the high scientific and experimental quality we wanted for the journal. In

addition, we acknowledge the amazing dedication of the authors, who submitted their work even before the journal was officially recognized by Scopus and Thomson Reuters (in 2015), and of the reviewers for their continued support in providing expertise to the Journal. Thanks to all of the ISEV community, the Journal has truly become a major communication channel, publishing not only original research, technical and review articles, but also the abstracts of the annual ISEV meeting, reports on various EV meetings, editorials from the ISEV and JEV board, and letters to the editors fostering discussion on EV topics.

During these years, we have endured an unexpected change of publisher (when Co-action was sold to Taylor and Francis at the end of 2016), but still achieved recognition by Scopus in 2015 leading to a CiteScore calculation in 2016 (our first CiteScore was 13.15!). We have gone from partial recognition by Thomson Reuters, who accepted JEV in its “Emerging Sources Citation Index” in 2015 and started tracking JEV articles for citations, to official recognition by Clarivate Analytics and inclusion of JEV in the “Science Citation Index Expanded” in 2018. This led to the 2019 release of the first JEV impact factor (IF), with a double-digit figure: 11.000. This is truly spectacular for a new journal, but we think well deserved. This has been aided by the publications of the guideline articles MISEV2014[1] and MISEV2018[2], establishing standards for extracellular vesicle publication. In addition, a multitude of “highly cited” papers contributed to the high IF of 2019 [3–7], but the journal also published some “flagship” articles with very high citation scores in 2015 [8–10] and previous years [11–13], which were not used for the 2019 IF calculation.

As expected, the initial volume of submissions coming to the journal was low, and the acceptance rate relatively high (even though acceptance sometimes required up to 3 revisions!), but submissions have steadily increased and now with our newly announced impact factor has shown

a major acceleration. This led to a major increase of workload for the editors, and consequently, we have already started increasing the stringency of acceptance, and limiting the number of possible revisions. For the last 7 years, the requirements we had for articles published in the journal were most importantly for high experimental quality, with recognition of the specific issues and possible artefacts faced when working on EVs, and, of course, absence of plagiarism, but we did not primarily require novelty. We suspect that the new editorial team will face an even bigger increase of submissions, and thus will further increase the stringency of acceptance for publication in JEV. Keeping a good balance between technical quality, scientific innovation, visibility, and the journal's quality of ISEV's communication means, will be a challenge for the new Editorial board, but we are sure that innovative solutions will be found and appropriate decisions will be made! We of course expect that the Journal will keep showing the way for promoting open and reproducible science in the EV field: by encouraging submitting authors to read and understand the MISEV guidelines and their updates[2], and to define clearly their use of the nomenclature (EV versus exosomes: see this recently published editorial[14]).

The prospects for continued successful evolution of our journal are great and we are confident that under the leadership of Dr. Lötvall there will continue to be great advances for our journal. We wish him well on his new venture.

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(WOS = Web of Science, GS = Google Scholar)

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