Core business, future direction, and the 10-bar target

The world of scientific publishing evolves almost as quickly as the data that drives it. Crucially then, the interest and focus of any leading journal must continually adapt and respond to change in order to satisfy the increasing needs of its ‘owners’—the readership and contributors. Annals of Oncology is of no exception.

As the official publication of ESMO, Annals’ core business—medical oncology—will quite rightly remain central to the scope and success of the journal, with supplementary publications firmly following suit. The rapidly emerging landscape of oncology however, demands flexibility. We must also consequently focus on insights from other areas of research that are proving equally important for the future of our specialty. A careful, well-considered balance in reporting must be achieved in order to best serve the interests of our community—now and in the future.

Looking ahead, we will need to apply even more rigorous selection criteria whereby only the top-tier research and the most promising of proposals are considered for publication. With the irrepressible explosion of novel data, the increasing number of approaches and technologies in onco-genomics, as well as the expanding menu of new treatment modalities, Annals must continue to attract and publish only the very best, most relevant findings within our field. This will not only lead to an increase in quality and prestige associated with the journal and the supplements, but perhaps even more importantly, help to alleviate the pressure that weighs heavy on us all, namely, keeping fully abreast of all the very latest developments within our field while still getting the ‘day job’ done.

By definition, supplements are additional to the journal itself and must therefore, more than ever, be considered and evaluated as co-performers rather than extras. Such competitive criteria should result in a re-think regarding certain publishing decisions previously based on tradition. While we typically publish between 10 and 12 supplements per year, no cut-off limitation has been established in order to accommodate exceptional educational opportunity set to both complement and potentiate content carried by the journal itself.

Broadly speaking, supplement interest will divide between two main categories: first, the continuously well-received publications covering ESMO’s highly established general and tumour-focused meetings, such as the ESMO Congress and the annual ESMO World Congress [1] on Gastrointestinal Cancer [2], and secondly, proposals that promise to deliver exquisite, ground-breaking cancer science and discovery.

Whichever genre a given supplement may take, whether it be proceedings (full papers or meeting abstracts), research/review collections, clinical guidelines, or position papers, each must be independent and balanced, include full disclosure for authors, editors and sponsors, and provide important insights that reflect the scope and interest of Annals of Oncology. Similarly, each will be evaluated based upon their respective value of dissemination and capacity to deliver critical research and clinical findings direct to our community, meeting the same rigorous editorial standards and selection criteria as the journal itself.

In terms of new direction, while medical oncology will remain our core business and leading area of expertise, we will in parallel be welcoming new ‘kids on the block’ to expand and promote cross-interest research and depth. Up and coming areas with important relevance to medical oncology, as recently indicated by Editor-in-Chief of Annals, Jean-Charles Soria [3], will include onco-immunology, translational science, precision medicine, biotechnologies, bioinformatics, modern statistics, and molecular pathology, as well as others that affect directly on our practice, e.g. radiotherapy and surgery.

Among other such aspirations recently outlined by Annals’ Editor and Associate Editors, was the clear ambition of raising the journal’s Impact Factor to 10 over the coming years. To do so, Annals of Oncology will need to further build on successes to-date and continue to up its game by reporting even higher quality, peer-reviewed data in the timeliest fashion possible. The same will be expected of the supplements. In order to achieve this goal, we will need to carefully consider both the number of supplement issues per year and the number of articles published in each, thus contributing to a better Impact Factor for Annals.

The issue where Supplement Issues are concerned must surely therefore come down to the following considerations: will the proposed supplement actually provide additional high-quality research and enhance the content of the journal itself? Will the topic interest contribute to better serving and educating our readers? Will it provide essential insight into medical oncology and other fields that will better equip us to advance patient treatment and care? Will it contribute to the popularity and prestige of Annals of Oncology?

By checking this tick-box list, the supplementary companions to Annals will further enable ESMO to advance medical oncology, better serve cancer science and medicine, and most importantly of all, ultimately improve the lives of those touched and affected by this hideous disease.
J. Tabernero*, on behalf of the Associate Editor team
Department of Medical Oncology, Vall d’Hebron University
Hospital and Institute of Oncology (VHIO), Barcelona, Spain
(*E-mail: jtabernero@vhio.net)

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