The first issue of JOP. Journal of the Pancreas was published in May 2000. May 2007 sees the beginning of the 8th year of publication and we believe that the time has come to evaluate our work.

On a beautiful summer evening in the past millennium (September 10th, 1999), during the course of a dinner in the countryside near Bologna, three friends: a pancreatologist (R. Pezzilli), a biostatistician (A.M. Morselli-Labate) and a professional in the field of information technology (L. Morotti), conceived the idea of creating an innovative journal; our aim was to initiate something which could represent a reference point for the rapid dissemination and distribution of knowledge in pancreatology. Since its outset, it was immediately clear that we would be facing a challenge since “It isn't because things are difficult that we don't try, but by not trying, things become difficult” (Seneca).

The three of us, the founding members of JOP, then decided to involve other people in the initiative. Those people who have played and are still playing a key role in the life of JOP are: Luca Burioni, a friend from Genoa who became the publisher of the Journal, Generoso Uomo from Naples, who enthusiastically became the co-editor of JOP and other researchers around the world who kindly accepted to become members of the Editorial Board.

Why did we decide to create a new journal? As the reader will recall, there were two established journals at that time which were devoted to the pancreatology. Still, we felt that there was the need to create a journal with different characteristics:

- an open access journal;
- a journal in electronic format only in order to ensure rapid dissemination of the articles accepted;
- a journal with an innovative copyright because we strongly believe that it is crucial that authors retain the intellectual property of the articles that they send to journals in order to facilitate scientific communication and exchange.

Furthermore, we wanted to create a journal which could also represent the means for disseminating knowledge about negative data because negative results are a crucial component of a streamlined strategic plan for medical research [1]. Finally, we wanted to encourage the publication of original data and statistical reports, in order to guarantee the reliability of the results by reducing the occurrence of misconduct related to data analysis [2], as well as the publication of original multimedia scientific material, such as videos, clinical images, slide shows, etc.. Of course, we also realized that the quality of a scientific article had to be certified by a serious and accurate peer-reviewing process; therefore, we decided that every single paper submitted to JOP had to go through a thorough - but very rapid - reviewing process.
With all those clear goals in mind, in January 2000 we invited many potential readers and authors to submit their papers to the new journal. The majority of researchers in the field of pancreatology welcomed our initiative and encouraged us to continue the project while a few scientists found it difficult to understand why we wanted to go ahead and asked for details about the reasons for creating an online open access journal. One of them in particular stated: “Who is JOP, particularly who is the people behind JOP? Certainly I have an interest in this JOP entertainment but I need some more information particularly because there are already two established journals for the pancreas” and another one warned: “To steer a journal is not like steering a car”.

However, many other pancreatologists reacted to our invitation in a very concrete way, thus making it possible for JOP to come to life and to steadily grow with time. We owe special gratitude to the following:

- the pioneer authors of the first issue of JOP: Edward Bradley III who contributed with the first editorial [3]; Gaetano Ciancio and coworkers [4] and Kolar and Lawson [5] who submitted the first two manuscripts; Po Sing Leung, the guest editor of the first successful virtual round table published in our journal [6]; Konstantinos Mimidis and coworkers [7] who were the first who had the courage to publish source data and statistics;
- all the authors from all countries who have trusted JOP and decided to send us the results of their research and observations (Figures 1, 2 and 3);
- our reviewers for their hard work, the value of which is confirmed by the manuscript rejection rate which is about 45% at present (Figure 4);
the manufacturers which have supported us in this ‘Pancreatic Trophy’: ‘Biotrin’, which gave us the first grant; ‘sanofi aventis’ and ‘Solvay Pharmaceuticals’, our current main sponsors; ‘Italfarmaco S.p.A.’ and ‘Mipharm’ which supported us in publishing the Congress Proceedings;

our friends who read JOP at all times; the sun never sets on JOP (Figures 5, 6 and 7). They are the real treasure of our journal and without them we have no reason to exist.

JOP now has a well established place among ‘pancreatic’ journals. This is a matter of fact stated by:

the number of papers submitted (Figure 1), which is growing, and also the number of articles published (Figure 2), which is increasing although the rejection rate is increasing too (Figure 4);

the citations are also growing and many articles have a high score in this respect (Figure 8).

This is a problem for JOP because, if a journal is not indexed there, it is also excluded from the JCR (Journal Citation Report) and no impact factor (IF) can be assigned to it. We do not want to say here that we believe in the importance, equity and correctness of such an evaluation method for the assessment of the quality of a scientific contribution. As a matter of fact, though, a significant number of scientists keep asking what the IF value is for JOP or when JOP will be assigned an IF value. Due to the high number of requests of this kind from our readers and authors, we have really spent a lot of time and effort in trying to convince ISI to take JOP into consideration for inclusion in the list of journals indexed by them. In the past 7 years, we have written to ISI many times but we have actually never gotten a real answer from them. They have not even told us the reason why JOP is not indexed, so we came to the conclusion that ISI's commercial interests are prevailing over the scientific ones. We have estimated the possible impact factor of our journal and currently it would be 0.846 (Figure 8); although, most importantly, the immediacy index (II) should be taken into account. The value of this index is determined by the number of citations to articles that have been published in a journal within the same calendar year of the citing ones. The reader should note that about 80% of the overall journals indexed in the 2005 ISI database had an II lower than the one that JOP would have scored (0.398). 2006 II data is not yet available but, considering that JOP estimated II increased to 0.691 in 2006, we can state that the ease of access, the rapidity of publication and the quality of articles, testimony the prestige of JOP.

In the era of the open access initiative (OAI) movement, where thousands of freely accessible independent electronic journals truly allow for the rapid and - hopefully - unbiased dissemination of knowledge, we believe that the articles should be impacted and not the journal, or that ‘electronic hit data’ derived from websites should be used in an intelligent way to provide an access factor [8]. A fair way to measure the quality and importance of scientific contributions would be to assign a quality value to the actual article, based on the number of times it is accessed and cited. Today’s technology allows for these measurement criteria. Furthermore, the papers published in open access journals will be usable not only for navigation and evaluation, but also for analyzing and predicting research directions and influence [9].

Our hope is that JOP, now in its adolescence, will be able to grow and reach adulthood, and that our readers and authors will be able to consider it one of the reference journals in the field of pancreatology around the world. Finally, this is our answer to the question as to whether or not “it is easier to steer a Ferrari than to steer an online journal”. Thanks to the progress in the area of electronic devices, currently, a Ferrari is easy to drive even by children (Figure 9); an electronic journal, on the contrary, requires a constant attention because electronic devices alone are not sufficient to keep a high standard of quality; hard work is needed to ensure the constant scientific growth of JOP. Indeed, our community of authors, editors and readers has greatly helped us to reach the 8th year of publication and it is with its support and commitment that we will be able to continue to meet our goal to serve the
scientific community with an innovative tool for the rapid dissemination of knowledge in the field of pancreatology. Indeed, JOP has represented and will continue to represent a strong example of how truly effective scientific communication can be accomplished outside the old-fashioned, sometimes unfair, lobbies represented by the big names of the publishing world.

**Keywords** Anniversaries and Special Events; Copyright; Peer Review, Research; Periodicals; Publication Bias; Publishing; Scientific Misconduct

**Abbreviations** IF: impact factor; II: immediacy index, OAI: open access initiative

**Conflict of interest** The authors have no potential conflicts of interest

**Correspondence**
Raffaele Pezzilli
Department of Digestive Diseases and Internal Medicine
Sant’Orsola-Malpighi Hospital
Via Massarenti, 9
40138 Bologna
Italy
Phone: +39-051.636.4148
Fax: +39-051.549.653
E-mail: raffaele.pezzilli@aosp.bo.it

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