

The Netherlands Journal of Medicine: 1998-2002, what came out of it?

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When I took over as the seventh Editor-in-Chief in 1998, the Journal was in good shape. The Journal received about 110 articles yearly, 20% from abroad, its impact factor had risen substantially and took the 45th place in the ranking of journals in medicine. Moreover, it was available to more than 2000 subscribers in all continents.

However, the editors wanted more. In the decade of mergers, the internet and the Euro, the editorial board, in close collaboration with the Netherlands Association of Internal Medicine (NIV), started to look at ways to intensify cooperation with European journals with the same scope. Firstly, with the help of Elsevier, the Journal was made available electronically. Immediately, between 500 and 700 articles were downloaded monthly, adding up to more than 20,000 at the end of our term in December 2001.¹

What should the future direction be? In our vision we could go in two directions:

- Going more global and improving the scientific content in a way that we would translate the findings from 'subspecialties' in the context of the impact of general medical practice or
- Stay in line with the statement of the first Editor-in-Chief, Professor G.A. Lindeboom, in 1958 and act as 'a forum for Dutch internists and stimulate young doctors to write their first publication'.

This was a profound and difficult decision to make. The opinions among Dutch internists varied. It appeared that most Dutch internists wanted the best of both worlds: a high impact journal in which young doctors could write their first publications. In our opinion these ambitions were hard to combine but we certainly had to reconsider our European plans.

Moreover, in accordance with a well-known Dutch tradition, the costs of the journal were a topic at every annual convention of the NIV, many finding the Journal too expensive.

By the end 2001 it was finally decided that the journal would leave the scientific publisher Elsevier and move to the commercial publisher Van Zuiden Communications.

In our opinion this was choosing for the second option and consequently the decision had great impact. Firstly, the availability in medical libraries throughout the world was not anchored. Moreover, the journal was no longer available electronically. Together this influenced the impact factor which decreased from 0.93 in 2001 to 0.57 in 2003. Despite these turbulent times we thoroughly enjoyed our Editorship. We all had a very good time and each of us (*figure 1*) remembers the exciting discussions we had at the Tuesday afternoon editorial board meetings. Every aspect of an important journal such as fraud, disagreement with the readership and excitement about high-quality contributions passed our desks. It was with sadness and, given the uncertain future, with concern that at the end of our term we looked for a new Editorial team. Finding Professor J.W.M. van de Meer willing to guide the journal into a new future was a great relief. As stated in our editorial in December 2001,¹ we were sure we had left the Journal in good hands.

REFERENCE

1. Hoepelman IM. The Netherlands Journal of Medicine: end of a fruitful period and a new start. *Neth J Med* 2001;59:267-9.

Figure 1. A.I.M. Hoepelman, C.A. Gaillard, G.H. Blijham and J.B. Hoekstra

