
EDITORIAL COMMENT

What is the Future for the Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention (and Control) and the Asian Pacific Organization for Cancer Prevention (and Control)?

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Abstract

The Asian Pacific Organization for Cancer Prevention was launched approximately 10 years ago with publication of a booklet entitled 'Introduction to Cancer Prevention in Tables and Figures'. This was followed by regular quarterly publication of the APJCP starting in the year 2000 - a new project for a new millennium - and a number of research meetings held across Asia. The journal is now in its 10th year, indexed on PubMed and Science Citation Index (Expanded) and relatively well known (not least for its yellow cover). However, its future after its tenth birthday remains uncertain, as there is no infrastructure in place to ensure continuation after retirement of the present Chief/Managing Editor. The question of what might be the best way forward is the focus for the present 'Editorial Comment'. For financial as well as ecological reasons the APJCP is now an electronic journal, printing and postage for issues of almost 200 pages being beyond the resources available. While the costs are therefore relatively low and primarily limited to staff salaries, they do need to be covered and it cannot be simply assumed that the present support provided by the UICC Japanese National Committee will continue long-term. Therefore comments and suggestions are invited from all interested individuals and institutions as to how the APJCP, and by extension the APOCP, should be organized and financed. All communications received will be given space in the next few issues of the APJCP so that discussion can be fostered and informed decisions made at the 5th APOCP General Assembly Conference in Istanbul, April 2010.

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History of the APOCP/APJCP

The Asian Pacific Organization for Cancer Prevention was launched approximately 10 years ago when one British scientist with a long history of cancer research in Japan came across a copy of the European Journal of Cancer Prevention. This encounter, and the strong feeling that someone in Asia should try to organize publication of an equivalent journal for the Asian Pacific, led to persuasion of a number of Japanese scientists to provide support and the APOCP/APJCP was born in 1999 with a Supplement entitled 'Introduction to Cancer Prevention in Tables and Figures'.

Although the APOCP was established as an international group of cancer researchers and has been responsible for a total of four General Assembly Conferences and numerous regional and specialist meetings since the founding conference in 2000 (Deerasamee, 2000) (thanks due to many people in China, Iran, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand and Turkey who have so far acted as local organizers) it has never existed as a duly constituted legal body in any of the countries of Asia. This has greatly hindered long-term planning. While membership fees were collected in Japan and Korea (at

100 and 50 US\$ per head) in order to cover APJCP publication and postage for the first 8 years, when the issues were under 80 pages, this was ceased as soon as printing was discontinued due to increase in the number of papers accepted and therefore printing and postage costs. The fact that the APJCP is accessible on both PubMed and Science Citation Index Expanded means that the international profile is now becoming well established. The total number of papers accepted for 2008 was 160, and this year has already seen over 90 submissions.

Change for the Future?

Following the decision to publish the APJCP as an electronic journal with quarterly preparation of Mini-Abstract files which can be printed out in place of hard copies (see www.apocp.org), with free downloads of all the complete manuscripts from our website, it was felt that the collection of subscriptions should be discontinued. Almost the entire load had been borne by Japanese and Korean scientists, it being very difficult to collect individual membership fees of 25 US\$ from the other countries of Asia. The general opinion was that all scientists within the Asian Pacific region should be offered

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the opportunity to be members of the APOCP on the same free basis.

However, even with electronic publication, the papers must be formatted to Pagemaker files in exactly the same manner as for printing so that they can be uploaded onto the APOCP website for public access as pdf files. This is the basis on which PubMed indexes the papers published in the APJCP. Therefore, some staff are indispensable. For the first 6 years Malcolm Moore was able to carry out the duties of Managing Editor as a volunteer, largely due to employment at the Japanese National Cancer Center for a total of four years. He is now employed full time by the UICC Asian Regional Office for Cancer Control, primarily with the financial assistance of the UICC Japanese National Committee and Dr Tomoyuki Kitagawa as its Chairperson (Moore and Tajima, 2006b; 2008). However, the continuing increase in the numbers of submissions means that the workload in the editorial office is now beyond a one-man operation, as unfortunately evidenced by the present lateness of publication.

Many of the individuals who were instrumental in setting up the APOCP/APJCP are nearing retirement and if we wish that the organization and journal continue smoothly in the future we must begin to make the necessary arrangements for the younger generation to take over. We believe that the APOCP activities in holding meetings and promoting collaboration, for example in cancer registration and clinical epidemiology (Moore and Tajima, 2006a; 2006b; Moore et al., 2006; 2008) are very worthwhile, and in fact should be expanded. Including more training is an area which immediately leaps to mind. Therefore we urgently need to focus on practical measures. If the APOCP is now at last set up as an NGO, for example in Turkey, then how should its financial security be guaranteed? Should we introduce individual membership fees once again or perhaps institutional members, like the UICC itself? Up till now we have been living almost entirely off the generosity of the Japanese. We should not expect this to continue indefinitely. Asia is a very big place. If we cannot find sufficient resources in a more equitable fashion, then perhaps the APOCP does not deserve to exist. What do you think? A start has been made but more active involvement of people across Asia is essential for success.

For those interested in obtaining more background information, the aims of the journal (Moore, 2000) and reports of progress and financial matters have been regularly provided in the APJCP (Tajima and Moore, 2001; Moore et al., 2003; Moore and Tajima, 2004a; 2004b; Moore, 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008). The present Chief Editor has been criticised on many occasions for not rejecting sufficient papers. However, if a fair and effective system of peer review is to be set up then we need far more resources - it is greatly beyond the capability of one man (and occasionally a secretary) editing and formatting, while also producing his own publications, travelling extensively for promotional activities and organizing scientific meetings.

As President, Secretary-General and Coordination-Director of the APOCP, we therefore ask that you give serious thought to how the organization can be improved

in the future and send us your comments and suggestions for publication in the APJCP. We have one year before the 5th APOCP General Assembly Conference to be held in Istanbul in April 2010 with the theme 'Bridging Continents for Cancer Control'. We hope that you will all make attendance at this a very high priority so that we can have wide participation in discussions to provide a very firm basis for continued major contributions to Asian cancer control research stretching into the future.

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