

Farewell from the founding editors of the European Heart Journal - Case Reports

C. Fielder Camm¹ and A. John Camm ^{2*}

¹Keble College, University of Oxford, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PG, UK; and ²St. George's University of London, Cranmer Terrace, London SW19 0RE, UK

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What an adventure! Almost 9 years ago, Fielder petitioned the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) to establish a novel, radical, and experimental case report journal. A year later, John relinquished his role as Editor-in-Chief (EiC) of Europace, and it was suggested that he should take on a similar role with the new journal. European Heart Journal-Case Reports (EHJ-CR) was launched in the autumn of 2017. The intention of the editors was three-fold: to provide a top-of-the-range journal for reporting cardiology cases, to introduce an ESC family journal that could indulge in experimental aspects of publishing, and to offer an opportunity to young and inexperienced authors and editors to learn about writing and publishing. This latter objective might marginally degrade the quality of the manuscripts that we published and inevitably compromise the traditional means of assessing the quality of the publication, the impact factor. However, at that time a new and more relevant method of journal impact assessment, altmetrics, might be leveraged by the creation of an efficient social media team.

What was achieved in the first 5 years? There was a steady and much-faster-than-anticipated growth of the flow of manuscript submissions. During the COVID pandemic, it reached over 1300 manuscripts in 1 year. Originally case reports, small case series, images, audits, and editorials were offered as manuscript formats, but it quickly became apparent that audits were not popular. Instead, other initiatives such as a transfer system for flashlights originally submitted to the European Heart Journal, ECG challenges, and classic case reports illustrating new recommendations from recently published ESC guidelines were introduced. Just recently another new format of case report illustrating a research conclusion from a clinical trial, which was published nearly simultaneously in another ESC journal, was initiated.

EHJ-CR experiments included adding PowerPoint slide sets specifically made for publication as supplementary material alongside the article and podcasts relating to interesting articles provided by the editors. Most recently, video abstracts provided by authors are being introduced to move our articles further into the digital ecosphere. The PowerPoint presentations proved cumbersome and were not much used, persuading the authors to provide them delayed publication, and in the end, they will probably be sacrificed. However, the podcasts are very successful and are likely to stay.

A cardinal aspect of the plan was to involve the ESC and the National Cardiac Societies to a greater extent. The EHJ-CR is predominantly a

journal for young authors, and the ESC Young Communities should play an important role in the governance of the journal. Every member of the Young Communities Committee was made a member of the EHJ-CR Editorial Board and asked for their ideas, their criticisms, and their involvement in popularizing the journal and joining in its social media activities. We became very involved in many of the case report sessions held at the ESC annual congress and similar meetings of some of the associations, working groups, and national societies. In return for the journal's interest and our offer to award complimentary publications of the case reports judged to be the winners of the congress competition winners, the journal asked for its editors to be involved in the programmes as chairs or speakers. This was part of a reward system that was fundamental to the activities of the journal and its editorial infrastructure.

EHJ-CR has a very large body of editors involved with the pre-approval assessment of manuscripts and post-approval activities, for example, podcasts, PowerPoint presentations, videos, and compliance with CARE reporting guidelines. Another team of editors concentrated on social media, working through the ESC Social Media and the journal's own EiC account. The journal also 'appointed' reviewers, particularly junior reviewers, who were given the chance to learn how to review the manuscripts that the journal received under the guidance of associate editors, who in turn benefitted from advice from more senior and more experienced deputy editors. In principle, the reviewers are not requested to review a submission, but they are allocated and expected to do so under the terms of their appointment.

Each year it was necessary to replace retiring reviewers and editors. The majority of these roles were achieved by promoting members of the current journal team to fill them. Where roles remained empty, new team members were externally recruited. This was achieved by widely advertising the journal's vacancies and inviting applications for these posts. An appointments committee (headed initially by Dr Sabiha Gati and more recently Dr Ross Thompson) fulfilled this role. The committee was focused on recruiting outstanding cardiologists or cardiovascular surgeons in training or only recently having finished their training. Whilst keeping in mind the need for an applicant to have good reading and writing skills in English and simultaneously recognizing the requirements to achieve good gender balance and to spread our editorial infrastructure widely around the world, particularly in Europe.

The opinions expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the editors of the *European Heart Journal—Case Reports* or of the European Society of Cardiology.

* Corresponding author. Tel: +447538539540, Email: jcammm@sgul.ac.uk

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Those recruited to new roles were provided initial training prior to starting the role. A training seminar series was developed to augment this initial training for editors and reviewers. These seminars were undertaken virtually and organized throughout the year to inform the team of developments in medical publishing and ‘hot topics’ to help them develop as editors and reviewers. It was our intention to enhance the skills of our team so that many could be promoted to the next rank of reviewer or editor in the journal.

Each year team members were provided certificates for their work done on behalf of the journal with awards given out to the best reviewers and associate editors. Graduates from the journal’s associate editor, junior reviewer, and junior editor roles are given a certificate attesting to their work with the journal, and most of them kindly stay on in other roles to bolster our database of experts.

Each year the journal ran a competition to identify the ‘case report of the year’ for each of the major sub-specialties and for the journal as a whole. The deputy editors selected a small number of cases from which the best case for their sub-specialty would be selected by a vote involving the associate editors. The sub-specialty winners would then compete with each other for the accolade of Case of the Year, and this would be decided by a web-based vote of the journal readership.

We have been privileged to have the assistance of very many reviewers, senior reviewers, and junior, associate, and deputy editors. Our achievements are largely due to their involvement. Our publishers at OUP, Allie, Rebecca, and Sarah, have always been helpful, provided expert guidance, and allowed sufficient latitude for us to maintain our experimental profile. Our technical editor Sharon, the Editorial Manager ‘goddess’, has been at the heart of the journal, well known to everyone engaged with the journal, and it was she that held the whole enterprise together. Grateful thanks go to all these wonderful people. The journal was also very proud to have engaged all of the EiCs of the other journals in the ESC family as members of its editorial board. Thank you all.

All the roles in the journal are time-limited, which also applies to the EiC and executive editor. They are now time-expired and need to pass on their responsibilities to others with fresh ideas and new energy. The journal is in the excellent and skilled hands of Philipp Sommer, an EHJ-CR journal graduate, as editor-in-chief, and David Duncker and Christian Sohns are the new and enthusiastic executive editors. They will do a splendid job, hopefully turning many of the old ideas upside

down and refreshing the journal to keep it pushing publication boundaries and providing excellent educational content.

Lead authors biography



Professor A. John Camm is the British Heart Foundation Professor of Clinical Cardiology (emeritus) at St George’s University of London, London, UK. He is Editor of the *European Society of Cardiology Textbook of Cardiovascular Medicine and ESC CardioMed*, and retiring Founding Editor in Chief of the *European Heart Journal – Case Reports*.



Dr C. Fielder Camm is a cardiology registrar at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading, UK. He is President of the British Junior Cardiologists’ Association and retiring Founding Executive Editor of *European Heart Journal - Case Reports*.

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Data availability

No original data is used in this paper.