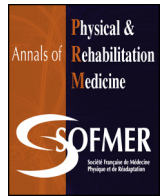




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Editorial

An impact factor for the 60 candles of the *Annals*[☆]



Happy birthday to the *Annals of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine*, launched 60 years ago (1958) by Dr René Waghemacker, who was editor in chief until 1973, then coeditor with prof Jean-Pierre Held until 1980. At the journal's creation, its name was *Annales de Médecine Physique* (1958–1982), with a local publisher based in Lille. Its main objective was to spread professional information among members of the French Society of Physical Medicine.

The journal was further advanced in the 1980s with the support of prof André Bardot (editor in chief from 1981 to 1988), the involvement of a national publisher, Masson Paris, and a new name *Annales de Réadaptation et de Médecine Physique* to fit with the emergence of the specialty Médecine Physique et Réadaptation (internship of 4 years in France). It was exclusively published in French to convey information in French-speaking countries. Slowly but surely the content of some articles started to be scientific and, at the end of the 1990s, abstracts were systematically edited in both French and in English [1]. After much effort and repeated encouragements sent to French teams to publish scientific papers, the eagerly awaited indexation in MEDLINE was obtained in 2001, thanks to the enthusiasm and tenacity of prof Michel Perrigot (editor in chief from 1989 to 2002), and the support of the Société française de médecine physique et de Réadaptation (SOFMER) president (prof Michel Barat) and scientific coordinators (profs Jacques Pélissier, then Michel Revel) [2]. This constituted the first major milestone in the journal's life and its birth on the international scene. If prior articles were never cited (only 6 citations between 1958 and 2002 in Web of Science), the citations steadily increased with MEDLINE indexation to currently reach 800 cumulative citations per year (Fig. 1). When Masson merged with Elsevier France, in 2005, the journal reached an international readership.

After having been editor in chief of the *Annals*, Michel Perrigot continued to promote the journal as SOFMER president, as had Jean-Pierre Held and Andre Bardot some years previous. Indeed, the movements and interplay between the boards of directors and editors were sustained within the SOFMER, ensuring a stability in the editorial policy [1–3], which in parallel enhanced the quality of the congresses and the journal itself [3–6].

Profs Michel Revel (editor in chief, 2003–2007) and André Thevenon (editor in chief, 2008–2013) continued to transform the

Annales into a scientific journal, in accordance with the SOFMER presidents profs Jacques Pélissier and Alain Yelnik who were aiming for the journal to obtain an impact factor (IF). Special issues covering hot topics of rehabilitation included high quality and well cited papers. Reviewers were encouraged to be more demanding on the scientific quality of submitted papers [4,6,7]. Spurred by prof Michel Revel, partnerships were initiated with other French-speaking learned societies of physical and rehabilitation medicine (PRM), beginning with those based in North Africa. Michel Revel invested heavily in young post-doctoral researchers to enhance the scientific production of PMR teams and to serve the journal. The best papers started to be published both in French and in English. Several pilot issues tested various ways to publish a bilingual journal, French and English.

In 2008, the decision was made by Andre Thevenon (editor in chief) and Alain Yelnik (SOFMER president) to launch a bilingual version, edited from 2009 with a new name: *Annals of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine* [6]. This transformation was accepted with difficulty by some colleagues, protector of the French language, who argued that by mid-century the number of French speakers in the world would neighbor 700 million. However, this change aimed at a more international readership and allowed for publications from authors who wrote in English. Also, the number of downloads increased in all continents, and the international readership had a positive impact on the journal's bibliometrics: although remaining high, the rate of full papers not cited in the 2 years after publication decreased from 68% in 2009 to 37% in 2013. Calculated from citations indexed in the Web of Science (Thomson Reuters, then Clarivate Analytics), the simulated IF increased from 0.1 in 2003 to 0.4 in 2008, and 0.9 in 2013. However, this increase was tempered by a limited number of submitted manuscripts, less than 80 per year until 2011 which implied a relatively high acceptance rate to ensure issues publish enough content. Another advantage of the bilingual edition was to facilitate collaborations and partnerships with other rehabilitation journals within the networks of international societies [7,8]. In 2012, Andre Thevenon obtained the label “published in association with” for the *Annals*, both for the International (ISPRM) and European (ESPRM) societies of PRM [8]. This policy of larger internationalization was rapidly rewarded with the election of prof Alain Delarque as president of ESPRM and prof André Thevenon as chair of the ISPRM communication/editorial committee. Despite these efforts the journal still had no IF. From 2003 to 2013, the queries made by SOFMER and Elsevier to Thomson Reuters for inclusion of the *Annals* into journal citation reports (JCR) were rejected 3 times. Even though the number of citations was

[☆] The policy of the *Annals* is to limit the number of self-citations from the journal. For the 2017 IF, the rate of self-citations should be < 10%. The particular nature of this editorial led us to make an exception. We could not avoid referring to editorials explaining milestone events of the journal life.

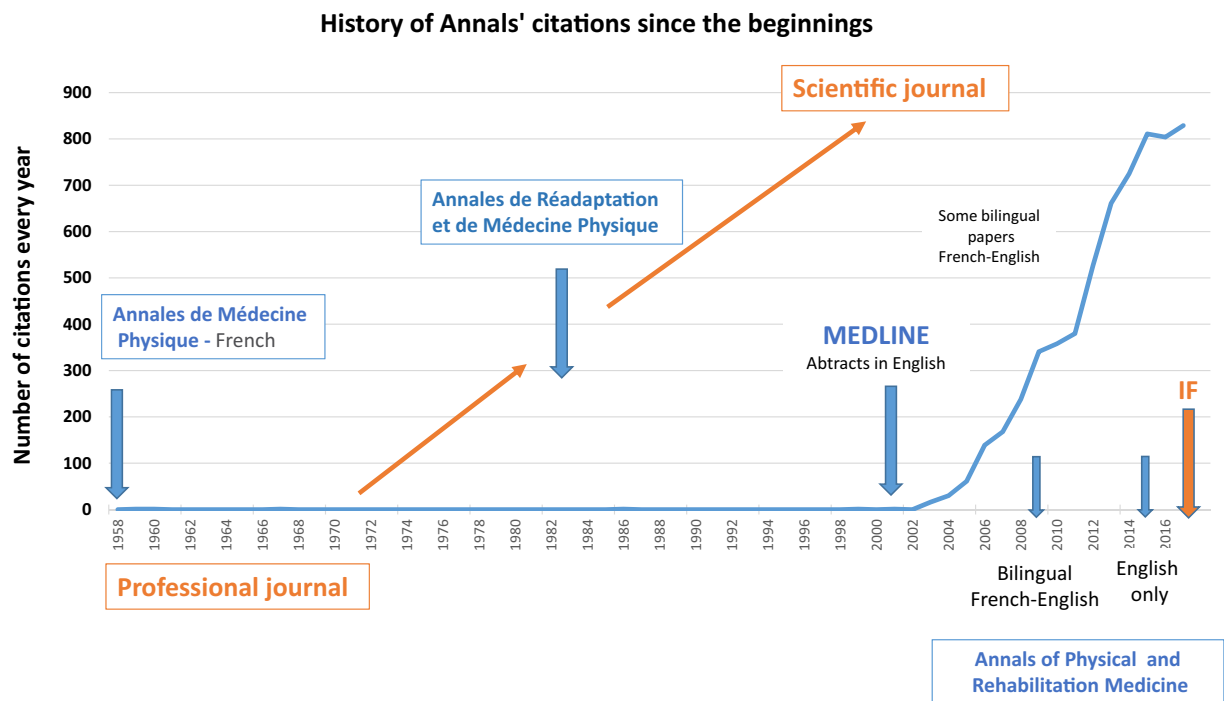


Fig. 1. Cumulative number of citations per year for the *Annals* in terms of milestones in the journal's life.

increasing, the arguments put forward were partly geopolitical: many European journals of rehabilitation were much better ranked (cited) than the *Annals*; too few recognized researchers were involved in the journal; and the journal did not publish enough funded research.

A few people remained persuaded that we had the scientific competencies and know-how to turn this challenge into success [7,9–11], and that obtaining an IF for the *Annals* had to be a priority for our community, especially for young colleagues [7,12]. This view was overall defended by the SOFMER president (prof Gilles Rode), vice-presidents (profs Serge Poiraudou and Paul Calmels), and scientific coordinator (prof Dominic Pérennou), together with the president of the PMR subsection of the French University Council (prof Pierre-Alain Joseph), and associate editors (profs Gérard Amarengo, Philippe Azouvi, Jean-Marie Casillas, Emmanuel Coudeyre, and François Rannou). After having convinced the publisher Elsevier, the board of directors of the SOFMER, and the French Academic Council of PMR to put much more collective energy into this project, a task force was established to take on the challenge of the elusive IF. This had to be the last attempt, whatever the final result. A journal steering committee was created, independent of the SOFMER board of directors. Its mission was to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the journal in light of the current international scientific competition, to objectively analyze bibliometric indicators, and make appropriate decisions to ensure more visibility of the published content in the hopes of boosting citations. A team of editors was named by the steering committee to raise the profile of *Annals*. They still serve as editors of the *Annals* and cosign this editorial. They were advised by an editorial committee comprehensively restructured on the basis of scientific merit and wide geographical representation. These international experts from all continents were well recognized in their respective fields, covered most rehabilitation professions, and were keen to help authors improve the quality of their papers. Their bibliometrics were impressive, reaching on average, per person (Web of Science 2015), 124 papers published, 3423 citations, H index 26. A novel editorial policy was defined and the

scope of papers published in the *Annals* was redrawn: papers promoting professional views without scientific analysis were no longer considered and the rubric “clinical cases” was suppressed [11]. Good preliminary studies were published as letters to the editor, together with clinical cases and notes of scientific interest. Meanwhile, the number of solicited reviews or update papers was increased, to ensure the publication of 2 or 3 thematic issues per year. Authors were strongly invited to register their study in international databases and were required to follow international guidelines [13]: CONSORT and non-pharmacological CONSORT statements for randomized controlled trials, STROBE for observational studies, PRISMA for systematic reviews and meta-analyses, STARD for studies of diagnostic accuracy, GRRAS for studies of reliability and agreement, and CARE for case reports. Authors were also strongly encouraged to declare any funding sources for their studies. Editors were particularly attentive regarding these requirements and ethical considerations. Peer review was performed by international experts, including many French colleagues, and particular effort was made to shorten the editorial process and make the journal attractive in this regard. Since 2014, a first decision is reached within 30 days on average after the submission.

Push had come to shove, and it was time to decide to publish solely in English from January 2015 [14]. Translations were progressively stopped and replaced with an editorial process entirely performed in English, for a better final quality of papers. Efficient copy editing was ensured by Laura Smales, based in Toronto. Last but not least, the format was changed to shorter papers with a structured abstract and a nicer layout, and a new cover page specifically illustrating each issue. We are grateful to Elsevier team members, especially Karine Cuny (journal manager) and Christine Gray (responsible for the web interface of the *Annals* submission system), who made this transition as smooth as possible.

The enthusiasm and the dynamic pulse of these changes were rapidly gratified by some excellent results. The number of submitted manuscripts multiplied by 2.5 since 2013, to reach

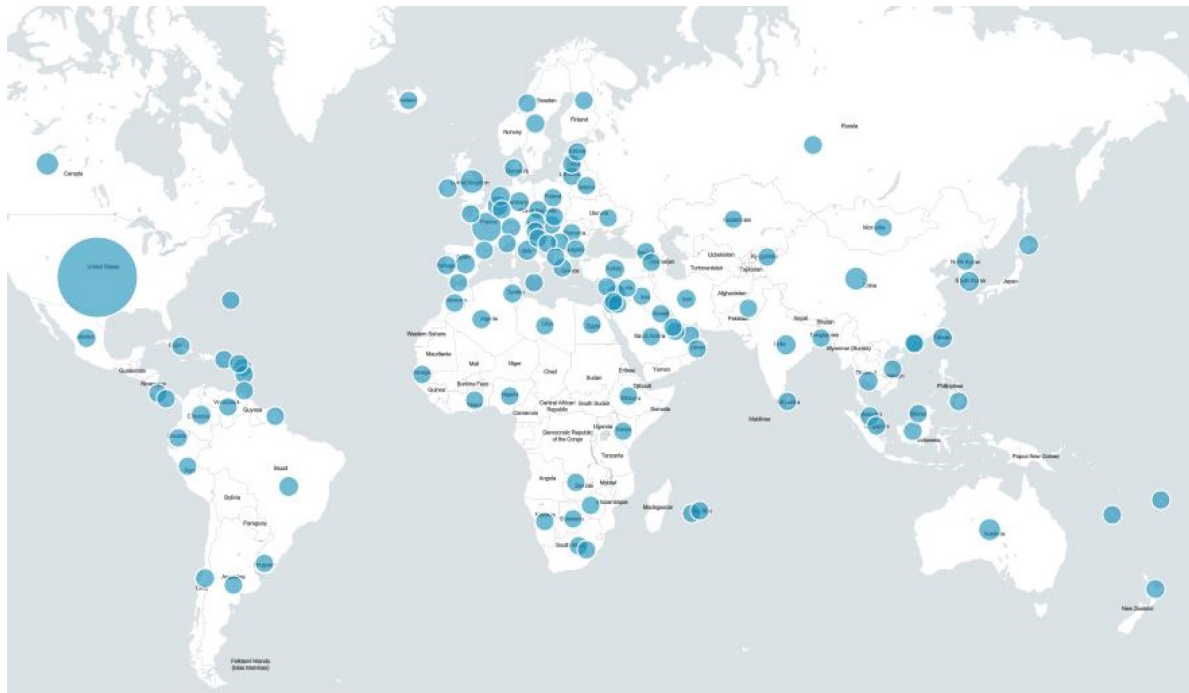


Fig. 2. Geographical areas of downloads. The size of ball indicates the number of downloaded full-text articles from ScienceDirect over the last 5 years. Source Elsevier.

about 250 in 2017, with a rejection rate of more than 80% for full papers spontaneously submitted. Almost half of corresponding authors are now based in countries all over the world. The number of downloads has multiplied by 4 since 2013, with the largest step occurring since publication entirely in English. In 2017, we expect *Annals* articles to be downloaded about 550,000 times, which is huge for the field. Downloads come from all continents (Fig. 2). Most importantly, the number of citations (Web of Science, Clarivate Analytics) occurring in 2017 for papers published in 2015 and 2016 should approach 240. Given that 93 source items were published in 2015 and 2016, a simulated 2017 IF would approach 2.6 (Fig. 3). The 2017 immediate citation index should also be excellent, as it was in 2016 [15]. This is promising for future

citations of these papers. We anticipated these excellent results and explained the journal evolution to Thomson Reuters. Our publishing editors at Elsevier have invested much effort into supporting the process (successively Annette Dore, Pascal Leger, Valentina Tursini). Elsevier has just been informed that the *Annals* is scheduled to appear in the June 2018 JCR with an IF and related metrics (Clarivate Analytics). We have achieved our goal, and expect to see the journal ranked in the first quartile of the category rehabilitation. We hope that readers and authors will appreciate this story of the evolution of the *Annals* to an international platform for academic exchange related to rehabilitation. We hope that this success will contribute to help rehabilitation teams enhance their scientific production, not just in French-speaking countries.

All teams that have led the journal since its creation have contributed to this success, step by step. All can be proud today to be part of this adventure. The current editorial board expresses its gratitude to all persons involved in the journal's life, especially authors and reviewers who played a crucial role. The top ranked rehabilitation journals increase their average IF every year. Maintaining the *Annals* ranking and even enhancing it is our next challenge. Spurred by the steering committee, the team of editors will be evolving with the addition of new associate editors from North America and Asia. A journal does not exist solely for its ranking in databases; we encourage authors and reviewers to sustain the extraordinary efforts they have already made and help us continue to improve the quality of the *Annals*, a transdisciplinary journal of rehabilitation establishing synergies between professions and fields [11], with an assumed orientation toward translational research. The *Annals* story is an amazing project that serves disabled persons and rehabilitation sciences. Long live the *Annals*.

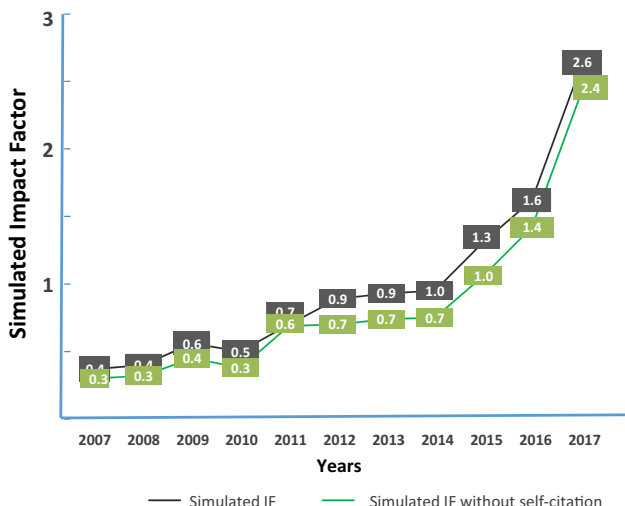


Fig. 3. Increase in simulated impact factor.

Disclosure of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interest.

Acknowledgments

D. Pérennou is grateful to Michel Barat and Gilles Rode for having checked some milestones of the journal life in the archives and libraries of their departments.

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Received 20 December 2017

Accepted 20 December 2017