Championing Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology: The New Investigator Review Award

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AFTER THREE FULL YEARS shepherding the journal, our editorial team has debated how best to continue the broad focus and tradition of the journal and how to attract more authors. While our impact factor, submission rate, and “time to first decision” have remained relatively stable, we recognize that just as the American Physiological Society is seeking to develop initiatives to reverse the trend of the graying of our membership, so must our journal seek to attract and encourage manuscripts from Early Stage Investigators. Several initiatives introduced by the previous editorial team, led by Editor-in-Chief Curt Sigmund, have been continued in an effort to attract Early Career Physiologists to the journal and membership in the Society. For several years AJP-Regulatory Integrative Comparative Physiology has sponsored a program of Invited Reviews from the Data Diuresis Session organized by the Water and Electrolyte Section at the annual Experimental Biology meetings. Those Reviews, for the most part, were authored by junior investigators and trainees. In addition, AJP-Regu has begun sponsoring graduate student and postdoctoral fellow Abstract and Poster Awards at APS Conferences and Specialty Meetings when the topics of those meetings “fit” the focus of the journal.

A conscious effort also has been made to recruit more junior physiologists to our editorial review process, including the appointment of a significant number of early career investigators to our Editorial Board. We have begun taking advantage of the Special Calls for Papers initiatives to provide the opportunity for several early and mid career investigators to gain more in depth experience as Guest Editors. By partnering those Guest Editors with members of our current editorial team, we hope to develop new candidates for future Associate Editor appointments and to reach out to a younger population of potential authors.

We are excited therefore to have recently announced a new initiative, developed by our editors, that we hope will further our efforts to draw early career stage investigators to our journal. The New Investigator Review Award Program targets early stage investigators, whose terminal degree was granted within the past seven calendar years. We invite postdoctoral fellows, interns/residents, junior faculty, and young physiologists in industry to submit single authored, Review articles that illuminate normal or abnormal regulation and integration of physiological mechanisms at all levels of biological organization, ranging from molecules to humans, including clinical investigations. All manuscripts will undergo traditional peer review and up to five will be selected for an award of $1,000 each. Articles and the author’s current curriculum vitae must be received no later than June 30, 2017. Only one revision will be allowed after the initial editorial decision and revised manuscripts must be received no later than September 1, 2017. The final determination of the award recipients will be made after all candidate manuscripts and their CVs have been reviewed and a poll of the Associate Editors completed. Manuscripts not selected for the awards will be published as regular Reviews. All accepted Reviews will be published by the Journal in 2017 under a special heading. Complete information concerning this program can be accessed on the journal’s website (http://ajpregu.physiology.org/).

We are committed to making AJP-Regu the “go to” journal in the fields of Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology, and we welcome your feedback and suggestions. Our current time to first decision remains around 22–23 days from receipt of the initial version of all manuscripts. Similarly, our acceptance rate remains in the range of 50–55%. While some journals have reduced the “time to first decision,” we have felt the more important consideration is the quality of the review, not the time itself.

We recognize that the journal attracts a wide variety of subject matter and that the appropriate pool of expert reviewers is often thin. Couple that with the pressures on all physiologists, both in the educational and research arenas, and the end result is often a delay in finding reviewers who can commit the time to perform professional reviews. Authors can help us out by entering names (and the institutional email addresses) of “suggested reviewers” when uploading their manuscripts. More often than not we approach at least one suggested reviewer when soliciting referees; however, authors should realize that suggested reviewers with clear conflicts of interest (recent joint authorship, shared funding, etc.) must be excluded from the process. Authors should be aware also that “suggested reviewers” in our experience do not differ from other reviewers in terms of the likelihood of recommending minor revisions or eventual acceptance of any manuscript. Just the same those suggestions do help us identify groups of individuals working in the same areas as the manuscripts submitted. Finally, authors also can help the process by returning revised manuscripts without delay, allowing us to decrease the “time to final publication.”

So paraphrasing a popular bromide: “Submit early and submit often.” Help make AJP-Regulatory Integrative Comparative Physiology the journal of choice in our discipline.

DISCLOSURES

W.K.S. drafted manuscript; W.K.S. edited and revised manuscript; W.K.S. approved final version of manuscript.