

## My Life as an Editor - Sung-Tae Hong



I graduated Seoul National University College of Medicine, and got a MD (1979) and a PhD in Medical Parasitology (1983) from the same University. I have been working as a parasitologist in Seoul National University since 1986, and became a tenured professor in 1998. My main editorial posts were at *The Korean Journal of Parasitology* (Associate

Editor from 1992 to 1999 and Editor in Chief from 2000 to 2005) and the *Journal of Korean Medical Science* (JKMS; Editor in Chief from 2009 to the present day). I am proud of achieving a monthly publishing schedule and opening access under the non-commercial attribution of CCL at JKMS in 2010. Moreover, during my supervision, the manuscript processing timeline at JKMS fell from 2 years to 3-6 months, and the journal got indexed by Scopus and archived in PubMed Central.

The JKMS receives approximately 1,300 submissions annually, which require great effort to fairly evaluate all this. Out of the 1,300 submissions, I accept for publication in JKMS roughly 300. Though the journal publishes a large number of original papers, we plan to request more reviews, editorials and letters on major health issues.

I have published 234 articles in scholarly periodicals since 1979, mostly on helminths and helminthiasis. As a researcher, I visited endemic regions of clonorchiasis to conduct field-based studies. I was an invited expert of human liver fluke disease for the monograph *Biocarcinogen*, IARC, Ryon in 2009.

Admittedly, writing and publishing papers have been daunting tasks for me. To polish language and verify scientific data, I always revise initial drafts of my papers and consult with other experts throughout the writing. Publishing properly edited papers is the most pleasing reward in our profession.

I chaired the Journal Evaluation Committee of *Korean Association of Medical Journal Editors* (KAMJE) in 2001-2010 and became Vice President of KAMJE in 2011. The Association has upgraded the quality of its member journals by implementing thorough peer review and educating authors, reviewers and editors. For its member journals, KAMJE runs the abstract database KoreaMed, full-text platform Synapse and Korea Medical Citation Index (KOMCI). KAMJE experience with indexing and archiving journals is exemplary, particularly for editors of small and non-English journals.

Bibliographic databases and search platforms play a critical role in research and science editing. Researchers and editors alike should be aware of the selection criteria and coverage of highly selective databases to plan their

studies, find relevant and updated sources, and link their papers to the best evidence.

The journal indexing is increasingly dependent on the digitisation. Digital editing enables managing editorial tasks almost ubiquitously. The whole process of an article submission, peer review, editing and publishing is now online in most journals. The digitisation substantially reduces editing and publishing costs and time. With the advent of the online editorial management, it has also become possible to build up a big reviewer pool and improve the peer review. For example, the reviewer pool of JKMS has about 3,000 experts in 90 subspecialties.

Scholarly journals should satisfy the educational needs of their readership. With this in mind, JKMS is trying to publish more papers of interest to graduate medical students in the first place. Many students may benefit from the open-access format of JKMS and other Korean journals by freely downloading full texts of the required literature.

KAMJE supports its members by educating editors and upgrading visibility of Korean medical journals. To some extent, we rely on information support of the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) and its journal, *European Science Editing*, which provides us with highly educational essays and expert opinion pieces. The EASE materials and guidelines cover science writing, editing and indexing of interest to authors, reviewers and editors. *European Science Editing* has become a driving force for the communication and education of editors not only in Europe, but also elsewhere in the world. I personally benefited from becoming a member of EASE. I now have a more expanded network of colleagues from EASE, who are helpful in guiding and advising on most challenging issues in science writing and editing.

For my professional interest and skills in science editing, I gratefully acknowledge Prof Seung-Yull Cho, who has been my mentor in parasitology and journal editing for many years. He was the Editor in Chief of *The Korean Journal of Parasitology* in 1976-1987 and Editor in Chief of JKMS in 1997-2006. I was fortunate to benefit from his experience at the beginning of my career. Editorial and teaching responsibilities have changed my life entirely. It is now dedicated to almost full-time editing work.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to give a word of advice to novice editors, who spend most of their precious time communicating with authors. Editors should, first and foremost, pay attention to the readership needs, because a journal's prestige heavily depends on the readers' evaluation. Editors must publish papers attractive for the readers, which ensures better evaluation.

**Sung-Tae Hong**

*Editor in Chief, Journal of Korean Medical Science;  
Department of Parasitology and Tropical Medicine, Seoul  
National University College of Medicine, Seoul, Korea  
hst@snu.ac.kr*