

News from the Editorial Board

Dear Colleagues and Readers,

After the Editorial Board renewal we decided to solicit our reviewers' opinion about *Acta Gastroenterologica Belgica* and its future. Everyone is aware that the heavy burden of reviewing papers can only be accomplished if the reviewers are devoted to improve the scientific quality and credibility of *Acta Gastroenterologica Belgica* at a national and international level. This opinion was further supported by the success of the survey : 68 answers were received over 75 questionnaires ! Before commenting the results we would like to ask each reader to give his opinion concerning the points raised hereafter (by mail, fax or e-mail acta.gastroenterologica@swing.be).

The 3 first questions concerned the reviewing process. The answers were quite homogeneous with some subtle distinctions. Most of the reviewers wished to be asked by fax or e-mail if they would agree to review a manuscript. This is indeed faster and cheaper than classic postal carriage and avoid sending the whole copy of the manuscript initially. We have some unfortunate examples of manuscripts being returned after a long time because the reviewer was unable to handle it in time. However, the policy will not be generalised, but adapted to the wish of the reviewer ! If someone preferred to be asked by post, we will respect his opinion. Whether electronic reviewing should be able to reduce the time of the reviewing process has not gained overall agreement. Indeed, it requires Internet connection between the authors, Editorial Board and the reviewers and a standardised exchange format including the tables and figures. It will certainly not be immediately applicable, but is a challenge for the future. Nevertheless, for the reviewers who asked for this kind of communication, we will make every effort to make it possible and friendly....

One of the most important parts of this survey shows that there is a definite wish for a website dedicated to *Acta* including abstracts and full text papers. Which is far from clear is the policy of access to the full text version of papers ! It probably relies on a misunderstanding in the question. We do not want to allow "internet surfers", even if they are scientific or medical readers, to benefit from the same advantages as our regular subscribers. So, definitely, subscribers will be favoured in this setting. However, we have to understand that the international spread of the Journal and the citation of articles is directly related to easy access to the full text version of papers, which is certainly not the case today with the paper version. Therefore, easy and free full text access to "electronic" articles is thought to be the foundation for *Acta's* international diffusion. One solution would be to allow free full text access to *Acta* after 6 months or 1 year of publication as it is currently proposed for many medical journals. In addition, the paper version of *Acta* remains essential, as it is easier to read in the garden, in the train, in the bus or in other places ... compared to an electronic version that needs to install or carry a computer.

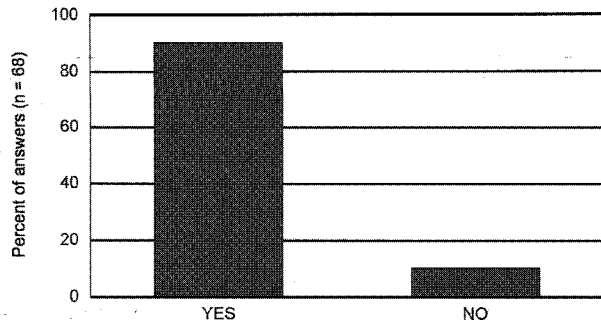
Finally, besides the administrative and financial decisions that need to be taken for *Acta*, the last point of the survey must be underlined : 95% of the reviewers thought that *Acta* should include epidemiological registries of GI disease in Belgium. Most of us are looking for such data, for example : incidence of upper-GI bleeding in Belgium ? Impact of *H pylori* eradication on UGI bleedings ? Incidence of hepatic or bilio-pancreatic tumours ? Impact of colo-rectal endoscopic screening in Belgium ? Many if not all of these questions still remain unanswered. The Digestive Scientific Societies concerned by these questions could manage those registries and epidemiological surveys and *Acta Gastroenterologica Belgica* would be happy to publish these data.

Acta lives through your opinion, so do not hesitate to let us know your ideas.

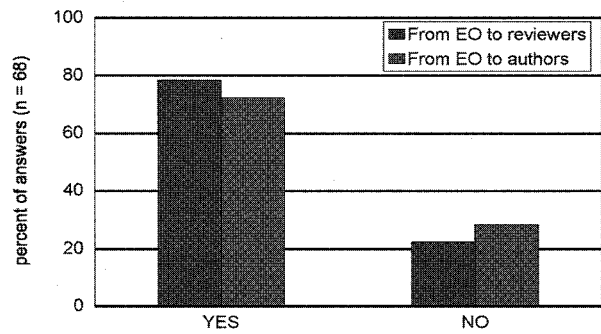
Olivier Le Moine
Editor in Chief.

Pierre Deprez
Deputy Editor.

1. I prefer to be asked by fax or e-mail if I agree to review a paper (based on title and abstract).

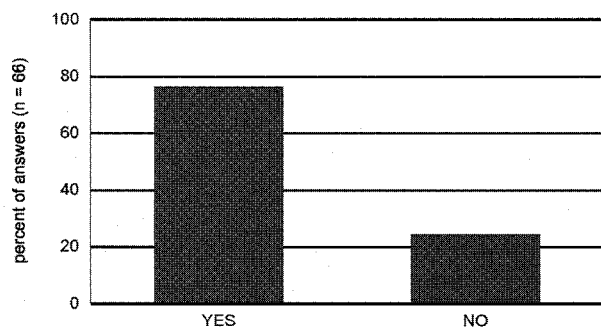


2. Most of the reviewing process may be performed by e-mail instead of classic postal carriage.

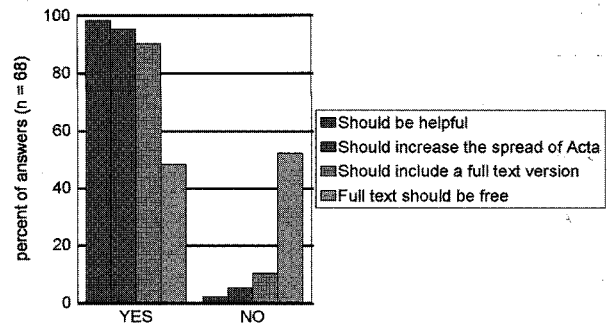


EO : Editorial Office.

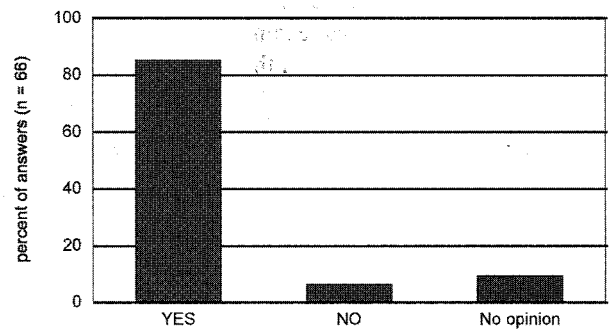
3. This kind of policy is able to decrease the time of reviewing process.



4. An internet website dedicated to Acta Gastroenterologica Belgica.



5. The paper version of the Journal is essential and should not be replaced by a web-based version.



6. Acta should include epidemiological registries on GI diseases in Belgium.

