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Editorial



It's been more than a year since *Forensic Chemistry* started accepting manuscripts, and we're excited to bring you an update about our progress. We are proud to share some very promising performance metrics that demonstrate a very successful first year in production and that bode well for the future of the journal. As editors, we strive to handle manuscripts as quickly and as fairly as possible, but the real driver for the success of the journal comes from you, our authors, our reviewers and our readers. We are very grateful for the trust you have placed in this journal and we welcome your suggestions for how to improve the journal and how to better serve the needs of our community. For example, how do we attract the highest quality forensic chemistry research content while also striving to be the forensic journal with the fastest publication rates?

Since the first submission in March of 2016, we have now received more than 130 articles for consideration. We provide each article with the same level of professional consideration. First, the handling editor (José or Glen) provides an initial evaluation to ensure each article is complete, is of sufficient technical quality, is a good fit for *Forensic Chemistry* and contains good quality syntax and grammar. In the first 16 months of operation, we have desk-rejected about 30 articles, most of which are either a poor fit for *Forensic Chemistry* or contain too many syntax and grammatical errors. The remaining ~100 articles were sent out for peer review to an average of two reviewers per article.

We currently permit 21 days for reviewers to submit their reports, and most reviewers appear to use all that time, or the last few days of that time! Given that some reviewers decline to review, some have conflicts of interest, and some are late, it has taken us an average of 47 days to reach the first decision on a manuscript. Authors then take an average of 28 days to complete any revisions, which means that it has taken us an average of 81 days to reach a final decision on a manuscript. Our acceptance rate of 55% reflects the relatively high standards of the journal. Some articles have been very high quality, but a poor fit, and in these cases, we have worked with the corresponding authors to provide a seamless transition of the manuscript to an appropriate journal within the Elsevier catalogue, without the need for the authors to resubmit. We are very proud of the fast “time to publication from submission” and we thank our publisher, Elsevier, and their staff for their dedication and commitment to make this a priority. Authors typically receive galley proofs within a week of having their article accepted. Articles are generally published online within 48 h of proof return. The average time from original submission to citable published article (including page numbers) is

14.6 weeks! This is a competitive “time to publication” rate for the forensic sciences, but we'd like to do better.

Regarding peer review, we are very grateful to all of you who have provided reviews in the last 16 months. We are excited to acknowledge four outstanding peer reviewers, each of which received a special congratulatory certificate for being one of the top reviewers of the year. They are (in alphabetical order): Dr. Candice Bridge at the University of Central Florida; Dr. Antonio Cantu, formerly at the US Secret Service; Dr. John Goodpaster at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis; and Dr. Michael Sigman at the University of Central Florida. These reviewers conducted more reviews than anyone else, provided reviews in a timely manner and each provided thorough, constructive criticisms of their assigned manuscripts.

We are excited to report that, because of our abstracting through Scopus, Science Direct and now Chemical Abstracts, our articles have been downloaded more than 10,000 times in the last year, read online 52,000 times and received 322 media mentions including in the Atlantic, EurekAlert, Wired, NIST Newsletter and C&E News. The most downloaded article is “Forensic body fluid identification and differentiation by Raman spectroscopy” from Prof. Igor Lednev's research group, which has been downloaded more than 1400 times. Well done Igor! The long-term success of *Forensic Chemistry* will surely benefit from a strong impact factor. Towards that end, we have an application with Thompson Reuters for a journal impact factor, which of course requires at least three years of publications before an impact factor can be calculated. However, our published articles are slowly picking up citations and we encourage our readers to cite and share the publications in *Forensic Chemistry* when communicating your scientific research.

We are excited to announce a special virtual edition of *Forensic Chemistry*, which is being guest-edited by Dr. Francesco Romolo at the University of Rome, Italy and Dr. Melanie Bailey at the University of Surrey in the UK. The topic of the special edition is “Nuclear Analytical Techniques in Forensic Science” and the volume will include both contributed articles and articles invited from attendees at the IAEA technical meeting titled “Enhancing Nuclear Technologies to Meet the Needs of Forensic Science”, which was held at the University of Surrey, Guildford, UK in Sept 2016. If you have any suggestions for other special virtual editions, please contact us with your ideas.

Finally, we are holding our next Editorial Board meeting during the International Association of Forensic Sciences IAFS meeting in Toronto, Canada on August 23rd, 2017. We will also provide several “Meet the Editors” sessions at the Elsevier booth during the exhibit

hours at IAFS. Feel free to stop to introduce yourself or to catch up. Board members and special guests should have already received invitations to the Board meeting, but if you have ideas or suggestions related to the operation of *Forensic Chemistry*, please contact José or Glen directly to request an invitation to attend. Alternatively, please feel free to call or email us your thoughts on how to further improve the journal. We look forward to seeing you at

IAFS in August and to working with you to promote your research communications in *Forensic Chemistry*.

Sincerely,

Co Editors-in-Chief
José R. Almirall
Glen P. Jackson