

RESULTS OF A QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT THE ACTA ORTHOPAEDICA BELGICA AMONG BVOT MEMBERS

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INTRODUCTION

In the course of the sometimes long history of a journal, it is good from time to time to evaluate its quality and to try to meet the expectations of its readers.

The purposes of a general orthopaedic journal, mainly read in a limited numbers of countries, are numerous. Besides reporting the evolution of ideas about the diagnosis and treatment of orthopaedic conditions, there is an important task for continuing education. A journal of this type must also give the opportunity for publication to young surgeons, without jeopardizing the quality of the journal. It is the editors' responsibility to watch carefully over the contents and presentations of "freshman's" papers. In order to evaluate the readers requests and their judgement, we conducted this survey.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

We sent a questionnaire to all BVOT (Belgische Vereniging voor Orthopedie en Traumatologie) members and junior members. Questions were grouped into the following subdivisions : professional specifications, reading specifications and suggestions about the journal.

RESULTS

We received 137 answers from 380 members (29%) : 25 were still in training, 33 had been in practice for less than 5 years, 40 between 6 and

15 years, 39 more than 15 years ; 98 of 112 worked in an association.

The majority also have subscriptions to other journals : 103/137 (see table I). Five (3,6%) never read the journal, 15 (10,9%) read every article, 42 (30,7%) read at least 50% of the articles and the remaining 75 (54%) only pick-up some articles ; 77 (59,2%) agree with the mixed French/English version, while 51 (39,2%) would prefer a uniformly English version ; only 2 (1,5%) want a uniformly French issue. For 44 (32,1 %) articles in Dutch should also be allowed.

Table I

J.Bone Joint Surg.	102
Clin. Orth.	45
Orth.Clin.N.Am.	18
J.Hand Surg.	16
J.Arthroscopy	30
Am.J.Sports Med.	18
Foot & Ankle	10
Spine	10
AAOS	21
Tech.Orthop.	5
Archiv.Orthop. & Traumat.	5
J.Ped.Orthop.	6
Act.Orthop.Scand.	9
Orthopaedics	14
J.Orthop.Trauma	4
J.Should. Elbow Surg.	9
Trauma	4
Ned.T.Traumatol.	6
J.Arthroplasty	12

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Table II

	In training	< 5 y	6-15 y	> 15 y	Total
legal	6	21	24	21 ²	72
hand	11	20	21	11	63
shoulder	9	18	21	14	62
knee	7	13	1	17	55
foot	10	15	16	13	54
sports	8	13	16	12	49
elbow	7	14	17	11	49
trauma	8	14	16	11	49
infection	6	11	20	11	48
pediaters	7	9	17	10	43
spine	9	9	14	10	42
tumors	11	9	10	12	42
hip	6	9	17	18	40
imaging	7	8	15	10	40
basic science	2	12	13	12	39

Table III

	Clinical studies	Case reports	Basic science
Too many	42	50	14
Too long	18	5	16
Too few	11	18	41
O.K.	48	60	43
			too difficult 19

Review articles (Current Concept reviews) are firmly requested : 96 out of 101 responders. The topics wanted are listed in table II. The appreciation of the 3 categories of articles is summarized in table III. Reading patterns do not always reflect the appreciation (table IV).

The impact of clinical studies on daily practice is not always obvious : 36 of the 137 responders claimed that these studies do not influence their therapeutic attitudes, for 18, they are important for their future management ; for 96 others, these

articles are important as a confirmation of their actual behavior. Other types of papers or contributions were suggested and were submitted for approval (see table V).

Sixty nine responders never published in the Acta, 43 did also sporadically, 11 once a year, 8 at least twice a year ; with a slight preference

Table IV

	Clinical studies	Case reports	Basic science
Never	2	2	13
Only the conclusion	80	N.A.	48
Sometimes	32	76	45
Always	16	27	11
Superficially	9	32	10

Table V

Suggestions	Requested
Editorial comment (on papers published in the actual issue)	70 x
Rare cases (very short)	35 x
"What is your diagnosis?"	36 x
Technical tips	65 x
Letter to the editor : comments on a paper published previously	24 x
Letter to the editor : short report (without peer-review)	19 x
"How should you do it ?"	27 x
No suggestions	37 x

for clinical studies (44) rather than case reports (31). Acta Orthopaedica Belgica is not the first choice for potential authors. Only 5 did not consider an other journal (23 did so) but for 28 the choice of the journal depended on their own opinion regarding the quality of their manuscript.

DISCUSSION

The majority of the BVOT members are not dissatisfied with their journal, but do have numerous remarks and suggestions. Not all of them can be considered for immediate adaptations of the present status of the journal. About several issues there cannot be drawn a clear line. The language to be used in the future remains controversial, with a majority supporting the present bilingual situation. There are however 32% of the readers asking for papers in Dutch. This cannot be ignored.

We have, based on this survey, the impression that there is a need for the instructional aspect

(97 want current concept reviews, 65 ask for papers with technical tips and 70 would like to see editorial comments). The clinical (retrospective) studies were considered too numerous, and only their conclusions were read. The impact of these studies is not that important and does not change management attitudes. Case reports were also considered too numerous but they have a higher reading index. While there is a request for more papers on basic sciences, the majority only reads conclusions, or only occasionally a full article.

There is only a limited need for interactive collaboration with the journal since 69 responders never wish to publish and 43 do so only sporadically and the Acta is surely not their first choice. Corresponding with the editor, reporting rare cases and quizlike papers are not listed as priorities by this journal's readers.

These data are nevertheless important and will be submitted to the editors of the ACTA and some issues have to be reconsidered.