

EDITORIAL

Evolution of the Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology Foundation

In this issue of *JGH Open*, Professor KL Goh has outlined the sequence of events that led to the publication of the *Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology* (JGH) (1986), the first meeting of Asian Pacific Digestive Week (APDW) (2001), the formal incorporation of the Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology Foundation (JGHF) (2002), the Constitution of the Asian Pacific Digestive Week Federation (APDWF) (2010), and the introduction of the open-access journal *JGH Open* (2017).¹ Although the evolution of these events seems “smooth,” their success is a tribute to Professor Goh and others who have a vision—that the Asia-Pacific region can take an equal place with North America and Europe as areas of excellence in clinical care, teaching, and research. Already, APDW is recognized as one of a small number of major international meetings, and research papers originating from Asia are increasingly highlighted in major gastroenterology and hepatology journals, including JGH.


In relation to JGHF, Blackwell generously transferred 50% of its interest in JGH to the editors of the journal in 1998. This was formalized in 2002 with a Deed between Blackwell Publishing Asia and the nominated trustees of JGHF, namely, WF Doe (Australia), GC Farrell (Australia), SK Lam (Hong Kong), YF Liaw (Taiwan), K Okuda (Japan), N Sato (Japan), and RK Tandon (India). The secretariat for JGHF was initially located in Hong Kong but subsequently moved to Sydney and, since 2005, has been associated with the secretariat of the Gastroenterological Society of Australia in Melbourne. Fortunately, careful administration by publishing companies (now Wiley) has resulted in ongoing profits from JGH, such that income for JGHF has been generated by both journal profits and investment income.

The idea of an open-access journal to complement JGH was initially proposed by Wiley in 2016. This was discussed with the trustees of JGHF, and a decision was made for JGHF to purchase a 50% share in the new journal, appropriately named *JGH Open*. This transaction will be completed in 2021. Despite the introduction of author fees and competition from many other open-access journals, *JGH Open* continues to attract good articles, not only from the Asia-Pacific region but internationally. Currently, articles in *JGH Open* are listed in PubMed via PubMed Central, citations have increased, and the journal is under consideration for an impact factor within the Emerging Sources Citation Index.

JGHF has the broad objective of supporting education, clinical training, and research in gastroenterology, hepatology, and endoscopy in the Asia-Pacific region.^{2–4} These objectives have been addressed by a variety of activities as outlined by Professor Goh. Historically, the major beneficiary of funds has been various activities within APDW, including special lectures, contributions to travel grants (with APDWF), and the Young

Clinical Investigator Program. Activities outside APDW include short-term training fellowships, regional symposia, consensus meetings, and part funding (with the Asian Pacific Association of Gastroenterology) of a longer-term training fellowship for a clinician/scientist. In addition, the Foundation is supporting the activities of the Australian and New Zealand Gastroenterology International Training Association (ANZGITA) that organizes innovative programs for endoscopy in underresourced areas such as the Pacific islands and Timor-Leste.

Despite wide variation in ethnicity, language, culture, economic development, and provision of medical services, gastroenterology and hepatology in the Asia-Pacific region has much to celebrate. Highlights include the discovery of *Helicobacter pylori*; reductions in the prevalence of peptic ulceration; vaccination for hepatitis B; treatment for hepatitis C; living-donor liver transplantation; programs for the early detection of gastric, colorectal, and liver cancer; and the identification of new diseases such as autoimmune pancreatitis. Public health measures such as improved nutrition and cleaner and safer water supplies have also been important, along with the exploration of dietary therapy for a range of gastrointestinal disorders. Challenges include the increasing prevalence of inflammatory bowel disease in Asia and the identification of cost-effective options for the treatment of gastrointestinal disease in low-income countries.⁵ Central to the collaborative effort has been APDWF and the international meeting, APDW. A cloud on the horizon is the possibility that COVID-19 will limit international collaboration and the viability of international meetings in the medium term. In the short term, JGHF will continue to support both APDW and a variety of other regional organizations that promote gastrointestinal health and improvements in the management of gastrointestinal and liver disease.

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