

Young GI angle: Challenges and opportunities as a trainee editor: The United European Gastroenterology journal experience

INTRODUCTION

Training and education are at the heart of United European Gastroenterology (UEG) and its leaders are essential to inspire fellow colleagues to achieve their very best. Leadership is a lifelong learning journey and UEG Journal has been accompanying two groups of young promising leaders on this path since 2019 when it first introduced the role of trainee editors in the journal.¹ Editing a medical journal is a challenging task and the best place to learn more about presenting your results and writing a paper, one of the important tasks of leadership. Selected among highly motivated young gastroenterologists with a keen interest in the publishing process, they are actively involved in every step during the editing of scientific papers. They help the editors to speed up the review process while ensuring rigor. Being able to be part of the peer-review process enhances their critical thinking, a much needed quality for doctors and future leaders.

Leadership is also about setting a direction and motivating others to embrace it and social media has become an amazing tool for this. Consequently, in 2021, trainee editors started taking care of promoting the journal and its content on the multiple available platforms. In addition, to further gain and enhance visibility of the journal, two trainee editors are in charge of improving the visibility of papers. This gives an overview of the great balance between supporting the daily work within the journal while introducing new ideas and paving the way of young researchers.

Collaborative leaders are effective leaders, and UEG Journal gave these young European fellows the opportunity to learn how to adapt and find the best way of working together.² Nonetheless, they have managed and succeeded in every challenge in order to help the editorial staff to create a fantastic environment and promote a high-quality scientific journal. Therefore, the position of trainee editor can be a significant inflection point in the career of these motivated and promising young academics and prepare them to become leaders in their field. Here we would like to provide an insight on the different

tasks in which trainee editors are involved and their perspective on the future prospects of this position.

WHY AND HOW DID WE GET HERE?

The main motivations that you may consider for applying for the position of trainee editor could be (a) to expand your knowledge about the editorial process and actively participate in it before to be an editor yourself; (b) to help in contributing to a fair and quick peer-review process; (c) to expand personal and professional networks (meeting young colleagues sharing with common interests); and, finally (d) to contribute in improving the author's experience and the overall quality of the papers that are published in our journal. Being familiar with the review process and enjoying this task (that contributes to the scientific rigor of research and the improvement in the value of papers) are highly recommended characteristics, although most trainee editors had no previous editorial experience. You can easily apply for this role through the UEG Talent Pool (<https://ueg.eu/opportunities/professional-advancement/open-positions#tp>), but you will also need to prepare a motivation letter where new ideas are especially welcome, along with a recommendation letter. All types of clinicians and researchers are welcome here, as multidisciplinary teams are of great value in scientific publishing.

WHICH ARE THE TASKS OF A TRAINEE EDITOR?

Trainee editors get the opportunity to be introduced into the editorial team and the life of an international journal in the field of Gastroenterology. They carry out various tasks under the direction of the Editor-In-Chief and Associate Editors, such as peer-review, proofreading, search engine optimization (SEO), or improving the visibility and promotion of UEG Journal in many ways. They are assigned different tasks of the publishing process, while they are involved both individually and collectively in submitting new ideas

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and directions, drafting editorials and/or reviews, selecting the UEG Journal Best Paper Award (<https://ueg.eu/opportunities/recognition-of-achievements/journal-best-paper-award>) or participating in sessions during UEG Week. The recent launch of the UEG Journal podcast is an excellent example of trainee editors' initiative and how they get support from the whole team.³

Once you start working in the journal, each trainee editor is assigned to and assists an Associate Editor in a specific field such as General Gastroenterology (including Microbiota and Small Bowel sub-sections), Hepatology, Pancreas, Neurogastroenterology, Inflammatory Bowel Disease, and Endoscopy. Depending on the field of expertise, the workload of papers trainee editors assist in handling and reviewing is about 10-20 papers per year. In addition, two of the six trainees are responsible for SEO (i.e., adjusting titles and abstracts of articles that will improve their visibility on search engines, see below). In addition, one trainee editor handles the (important) role of the social media editor, directly responsible for maintaining the official Twitter account (@UEGJournal), broadening the reach of the journal and its content online, and actively interacting with the growing Twitter community.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Over the last few years, the journal's officials realized that manuscripts were not only accessed through PubMed queries but also by online search engines and social media. Therefore, it is necessary to "improve" the title and abstract of a manuscript to increase its detection for search engines' algorithms. This process defines the term SEO and it has the aim of enhancing the unpaid or "organic" digital traffic. Search engine optimization helps to increase the visibility of publications across different platforms and directly impacts on journal metrics. There are some keys to success:

- Three to five keywords should be defined for every manuscript and incorporated into title and abstract and repeated up to three to six times.
- The title should be short, direct, specific and describe the content without any further explanation being required.
- It is also recommended that the keywords are placed within the first 65 characters of the title. Both essential findings and keywords should also be placed in the first two sentences of the abstract as only these lines will normally be displayed in search engine results.
- It is advantageous to repeat keywords in the whole manuscript and subheadings but as an SEO editor you cannot revise the whole manuscript, so the young editors will focus on title and abstract.

After publication, posting of the article in social networks and linking it with colleagues will also increase the visibility, digital traffic and increase both the author's and journal's metrics. As mentioned before, this position is focused on learning, so SEO editors will gather

important skills on how to optimize their own articles and increase their acceptance rate.

VISUAL ABSTRACTS

Pursuing education, our Journal seeks to "spread the word" approaching the newest trends. Visual abstracts are, in fact, closely linked to social media, following their rules and therefore prepared in a high-definition format. Some of the trainee editors collaborate for this task with a professional medical illustrator for their creations. The aims of a visual abstract are:

- To catch the eye of readers with a colorful image, in order to raise the interest in the paper and draw the reader to the full-text. The medical illustrator creates a draft with help of the trainee editor that highlights specific aspects to the table such as prevalence of a disease or certain risk factors.
- To give the reader a snapshot of most relevant findings, so these have to be summarized as bullet points or flow-charts.⁴ Thanks to the abstract and "key summaries" the job is usually easy, and the shorter the text, the better it is!

In 4-5 months, we have produced more than 25 visual abstracts, preparing it in 2-3 days right after the paper is accepted by the Editor-in-Chief.

WHO IS WHO DURING THE PEER-REVIEW PROCESS

After submitting a manuscript to the journal's submission system, a complex review process is initiated (Figure 1). First, the manuscript is checked by the Editorial Office regarding composition, arrangement and adherence to the journal's guidelines. Indeed, this formality is often only partially respected by the authors but crucial for the further peer-review process! Be sure to follow all requirements including citation style to circumvent unnecessary delay. After passing this step, the manuscript is assigned to the Editor-in-Chief, who will check if the paper is appropriate, interesting and reveals originality related to the journal. Manuscripts considered not to be appropriate for the journal will be rejected at this step and will not be further evaluated by reviewers. The Editor-in-Chief usually will ask for an Associate Editor of the journal who will handle the review process and support him during the whole process. They both will invite the most adequate reviewers that will evaluate the manuscript and send their suggestions to the Editorial Office. Based on the reviewers' comments, the Associate Editor and Editor-in-Chief decide to revise, accept or reject the paper. In addition, a journal's administrator proactively acts to streamline processes, update info and more. Here, trainee editors will be invited to participate in the review process or to be one of the reviewers. This experience is essential to learn and understand how you can improve your own manuscripts to increase the probability of acceptance in high-impact journals.

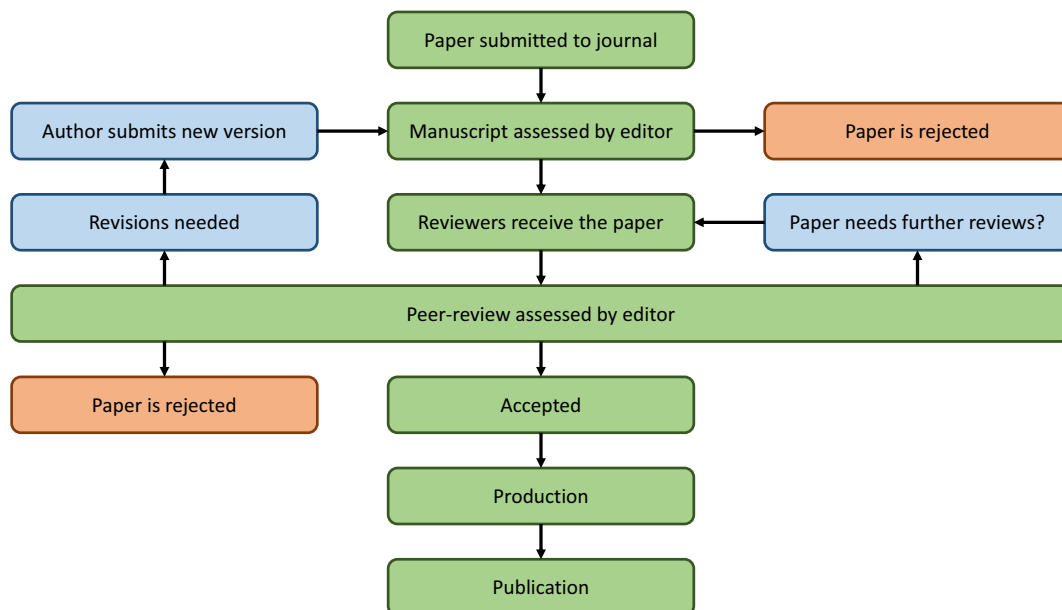


FIGURE 1 Overview of the peer-review process

PODCAST

The access to medical education has shifted dramatically over the years. A continuous influx of the most up-to-date evidence is needed, as thousands of papers are published every year in the field of Gastroenterology alone. In the meantime, different multimedia resources have been developed and are now easily available within the reach of our hand. Among the multiple options, podcasts have become very popular as they give you the opportunity to listen directly to state-of-the-art discussions or an in-depth review of a paper by their own authors. Its widespread availability and complementary role to the more traditional approach, lead us to the decision to start this project, now available in the most popular platforms.

The beginning was not easy. The UEG team of podcasters designed the whole format from scratch, from the music until the whole plan of interviews, and after listening to the first episode we found all this work so rewarding. Our driving force was – and it is also now – to provide the readers a closer and more detailed interaction with the most relevant papers of each issue, where the authors can go through the main aspects of their research and share their personal opinion on the future impact of their findings. We are now approaching to 2000 podcast listeners of our interviews. Our audience will inform us how we need to adapt this platform to fit everyone's needs.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING

We are witnessing a growing use of social media (SoMe) for scientific purposes.⁵ Despite initial ambivalence, SoMe made inroads in a sceptic scholarly environment and has turned out to be a blessing in

disguise for education in Gastroenterology. This phenomenon became tangible, and resulted in a number of articles that arose from SoMe networking.⁶ This demonstrates a new dimension of collaboration on research, and creating knowledge that expands beyond the walls of academia. It appears to have become a genuine tool with the multifaceted application for individuals, academic institutions, as well as for scientific journals.⁶ The latter seem to use SoMe even more extensively to spread their content globally, and for that reason, the role of SoMe editor became essential in terms of journals' adequate presentation to the readers, authors, and followers.

The role of SoMe editor is related to selected duties, and specified personal qualities may help fill them successively.⁷ The main focus is handling the @UEGJournal Twitter account to present the journal's content in different, accessible forms, supporting readers in staying up-to-date and gaining knowledge.

The leading advantage of that position is the liberty in executing tasks including selection of SoMe platforms, content presentation, development of new SoMe activities, and frequency of posting. It may sound seemingly obvious, but during the work as SoMe editor, the liberty appears the mainstay of unlimited creativity, including co-work with a graphic designer on visual abstracts, even journal website appearance improving.^{8–11} In UEG Journal, the social media editor closely co-operates with Editor-in-Chief of UEG Journal and the whole UEG crew, working in very flexible time slots, following the SoMe editor's beat. In addition, this editor may work at various fronts, as an individual, but also as a team player to empower projects of UEG Journal like podcasts recording, and share them with the rest of the trainee editors under the UEG Journal board guidance.^{3,12} Finally, involvement in the peer-review process and co-chairing sessions during UEG Week allows remaining pro-active in different roles. All this gives a sense of belonging to an exceptional family of

UEG Journal as well UEG, motivating and inspiring in the way to be on the crest of a wave (Figures 2 and 3).

A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE

The combination of senior and trainee editors is one of the best assets of UEG Journal. On one hand, the senior editors contribute with their experience and knowledge, and “train” their younger colleagues. On the other, the trainee editors bring energy,

motivation, enthusiasm, new ideas and help spread the content of the journal. As a trainee editor, it is a great experience to learn the process of editing, but mostly to contribute actively to the journal that represents the most of our specialty.¹³ Together, we have learned a lot and contributed to improve ranking and visibility of the journal.

A way to further enrich this experience as trainee editors would be to organize more frequent meetings, to get insights into each other's tasks and work more closely with experts from other specialties. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly



FIGURE 2 The Editorial Board of United European Gastroenterology (UEG) Journal, including its Editor-in-Chief and Associate Editors

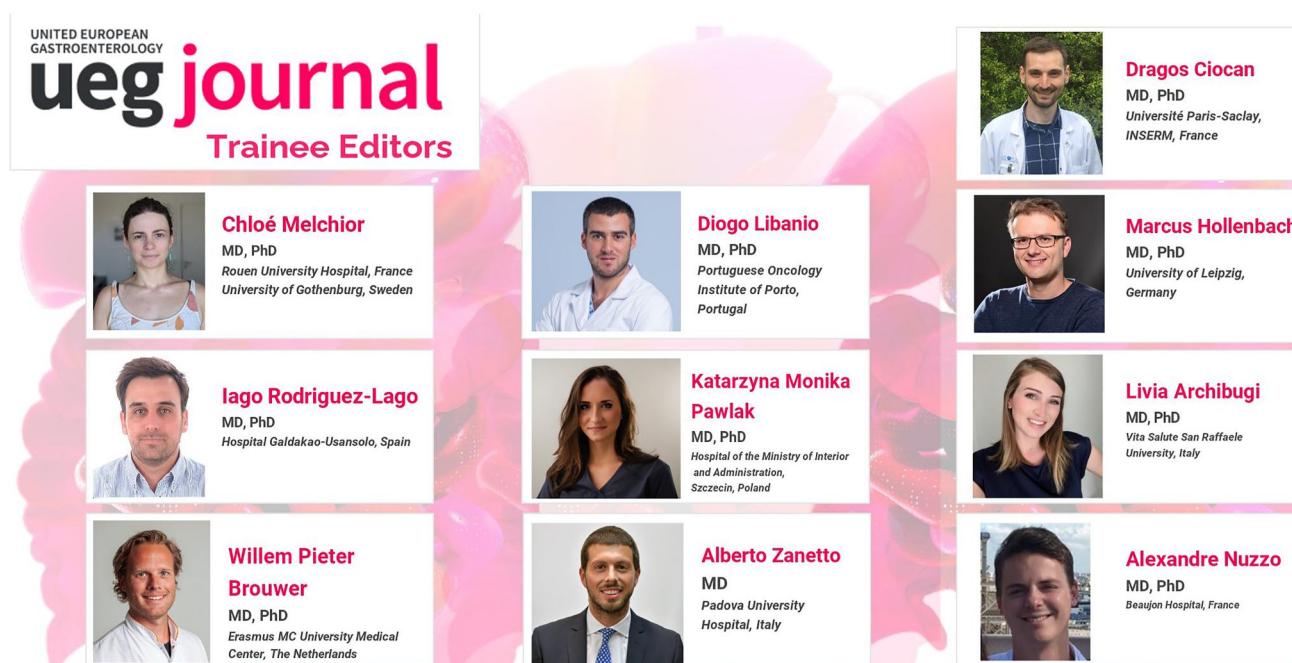


FIGURE 3 The team of trainee editors 2021-2022

disrupted the possibility to travel and meet face-to-face (we are excited to meet for the first time in May 2022!). Hopefully, this won't be a major hurdle for the next group of UEG trainee editors.

A closer interaction among trainee editors is expected to fuel scientific discussion and support decisions on how to further improve the UEG Journal and our community. Gastroenterology is a multi-disciplinary discipline with numerous interactions with other medical and surgical specialties. Such interaction is paramount both in clinical practice and in editorial activity to provide readers with the most useful, evidence-based knowledge to guide daily life practice. Therefore, one future goal is to enrich interaction with experts from other fields such as surgery, intensive care medicine, radiology, nutrition, among others.

Creating more multimedia content like videos, can help in clarifying the whole editorial process, is an additional point open for discussion. These videos could also be a new way to explain to a broader audience which are the tasks and most importantly the potential benefits that one could expect when applying for this role. Moreover, they can also bring new opportunities for authors and their findings to reach a wider audience.

In conclusion, being a UEG trainee editor has been a great and very rewarding experience for all of us. Do not hesitate to apply to the new open positions available in 2023 via the UEG Talent Pool (<https://ueg.eu/opportunities/professional-advancement/open-positions#tp>)!!

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the content of this manuscript.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTED

All authors contributed equally in the conception and writing of this editorial.

Iago Rodríguez-Lago^{1,2} 
 Marcus Hollenbach³ 
 Livia Archibugi⁴ 
 Dragos Ciocan⁵ 
 Diogo Libânio^{6,7} 
 Alexandre Nuzzo⁸ 
 Katarzyna M. Pawlak⁹ 
 Alberto Zanetto¹⁰ 
 Chloé Melchior^{11,12,13} 

¹Gastroenterology Department, Hospital Universitario de Galdakao, and Biocruces Bizkaia HRI, Galdakao, Spain

²Deusto University, Bilbao, Spain

³Division of Gastroenterology, Medical Department II, University of Leipzig Medical Center, Leipzig, Germany

⁴Pancreato-Biliary Endoscopy and Endosonography Division, Pancreas Translational and Clinical Research Center, San Raffaele Scientific Institute IRCCS, Milan, Italy

⁵Université Paris-Saclay, Inserm U996, Inflammation, Microbiome and Immunosurveillance; AP-HP, Hepato-Gastroenterology and Nutrition, Hôpital Antoine-Béclère, Clamart, France

⁶Gastroenterology Department, Portuguese Oncology Institute of Porto, Porto, Portugal

⁷MEDCIDS - Faculty of Medicine, University of Porto, Porto, Portugal

⁸Department of Gastroenterology, IBD and Intestinal Failure, Beaujon Hospital, AP-HP.Nord, Université de Paris, Paris, France

⁹Department of Gastroenterology, Endoscopy Unit, Hospital of the Ministry of Interior and Administration, Szczecin, Poland

¹⁰Department of Surgery, Oncology, and Gastroenterology, Gastroenterology and Multivisceral Transplant Unit, Padova University Hospital, Padova, Italy

¹¹Department of Molecular and Clinical Medicine, Institute of Medicine, Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

¹²INSERM UMR 1073, Institute for Research and Innovation in Biomedicine, Normandy University, Rouen, France

¹³Gastroenterology Department and INSERM CIC-CRB, Rouen University Hospital, Rouen, France

Correspondence

Iago Rodríguez-Lago, Gastroenterology Department, Hospital Universitario de Galdakao, Galdakao, Spain.

Email: iago.r.lago@gmail.com

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Na.

ORCID

Iago Rodríguez-Lago  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1133-4578>

Marcus Hollenbach  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2654-3164>

Livia Archibugi  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3979-9553>

Dragos Ciocan  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0416-1584>

Diogo Libânio  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2691-7522>

Alexandre Nuzzo  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8952-7620>

Katarzyna M. Pawlak  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0771-1177>

Alberto Zanetto  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6734-7178>

Chloé Melchior  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8146-1540>

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