

An Editor-in-Chief's Reflections on a 15-Year Journey



As I pause to write this editorial, my second-to-the-last as Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of the ASEAN Federation of Endocrine Societies (JAFES)*, my heart is full of gratitude for a 15-year journey that has been so rewarding. Fifteen years ago, my team and I accepted the challenge with a sincere hope, a commitment to learning something new, and a clear vision, that is, to provide a platform for Endocrinology in the region and have our voice be heard in the international scene too.

JAFES in 2010 was a modest publication, non-indexed and non-peer-reviewed, with few issues containing abstracts that accompanied our ASEAN Federation of Endocrine Societies (AFES) Congresses. Could we truly transform JAFES into a steady voice for endocrinology in Southeast Asia? Would we find the people, the support, and the perseverance needed to sustain such an endeavor?

Through the collective passion of equally committed members of the international editorial team, the trust of our contributing authors and peer reviewers, and the unwavering support of the AFES countries, our publisher, we continued to build piece by piece, milestone by milestone. To date, our editorial team could count 30 regular and 13 special issues; with 447 articles and 1,554 authors and co-authors, and we keep building on, moving forward, getting more people on board.

Learning from our esteemed colleagues from the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific Association of Medical Editors (APAME), we set forth to institute the most basic requirements of reputable publications. We established a robust peer-review system and launched an online Open Journal Systems-based platform for editorial management, thus streamlining our processes and making submission and publication more efficient and transparent. Slowly but surely, recognition followed. Our journal earned its place in the WHO Western Pacific Region Index Medicus (WPRIM), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Scopus, Clarivate Analytics, PubMed, and PubMed Central. We moved to an online first publishing model in 2018 and started the creation of visual abstracts for JAFES articles in 2019 to more readily amplify our content (for professionals and lay) across digital, multimedia and social platforms. These were signals to the world that Southeast Asia has a steady voice in the field of endocrinology.

Along the way, there were tremendous challenges: evolving editorial standards, coping with the learning curve for authors and peer reviewers, overcoming language barriers, augmenting the limited resources, and, in the last five years, dealing with the disruptions by the global pandemic. In fact, these hurdles served to strengthen our resolve and to reinforce the importance of regional collaboration and scientific communication.

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None of the achievements would have been possible without our authors, reviewers, editorial board members, partner societies, and, last and first, our readers. You believed in JAFES and in what it represents: scientific rigor, regional relevance, and pursuit of better health for all.

Our vision remains focused: to provide and secure that space where the voice of the region can be heard. With the extensive indexing of JAFES, our national and regional data can be recognized. It has become even more apparent that we need to establish our Southeast Asian data that do apply to our populations and can better serve as the basis of national guidelines. We continue to think of regionally relevant research questions to answer through collaboration among Southeast Asian countries, where clearly our commonalities are greater than our differences.

So as I prepare to pass on the torch, so to speak, my heart is also full of pride. JAFES is now well situated in the international publishing landscape. Our platform is strong, our community is growing, our commitment to excellence remains unwavering, and we are getting closer to our vision. Let this journey go on!

Elizabeth Paz-Pacheco
Editor-in-Chief