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EDITORIAL

Editorial: Celebrating 60 years of IJGO, 1963–2023

2023 is the 60th year of publication of FIGO's journal, the *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics* (IJGO), and to mark this anniversary we have invited five of IJGO's former and current Editors to reflect on their time with the journal. We have also compiled a special collection of seminal paper from the past 60 years, "60 years of IJGO"—all papers in this collection are free to access for a limited period.

We hope that you find this editorial interesting and informative—as ever, we welcome any general feedback, suggestions, or any proposals of special issues and supplements, at ijgo@figo.org.

1 | JOHN J. SCIARRA, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, 1985–2006

FIGO was founded in 1954 in Geneva, and in 1960 the concept of a FIGO journal was put forth. Professor Howard Taylor of New York, the fourth President of FIGO, made the statement that "Nothing could be more important for the Federation's prestige than a journal of its own", and in 1963 the first edition of the *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics* was published as a quarterly publication, with Professor Giuseppe Tesauro of Naples, Italy as the Editor. One of the early decisions was whether the language of publication should be French or English. The compromise during the early years was to publish in English with French abstracts. During this time there were two recurring problems—attracting quality submissions, and the financing of the journal. Societies were encouraged to subscribe to the journal, but relatively few did. However, by 1968, when Professor Tesauro retired as Editor, the journal had achieved international recognition. In 1968, Professor Harold Kaminetzky was appointed as the second Editor and the journal office moved to his department in Newark, New Jersey. IJGO became a bimonthly publication with Elsevier as the publisher, an arrangement that continued for many years.

During Professor Kaminetzky's editorship an editorial board was appointed, and the peer review process was expanded to handle the increasing number of manuscripts being submitted for consideration for publication. In 1985 Professor Kaminetzky joined the staff of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in Washington DC, and had to relinquish the editorship of the journal. Professor John Sciarra of Northwestern University Medical School was appointed the third Editor of IJGO, and the editorial office moved to his department in Chicago, Illinois. The journal became a monthly publication in 1989, with an increasing number of quality manuscripts being submitted from countries in every continent. The Managing Editor of the Chicago office was Ms Kelley Williams, and since this predated the days of electronic publication, all manuscripts were submitted as typed hard copy; correspondence was by typewritten letter and postal mail, often with long delays. Despite these problems, in the 1990s the time from submission to publication was between 30 and 40 weeks, comparable to other journals at that time.

Some notable events during Professor Sciarra's editorship were the triennial publication of the World Report on Women's Health, the triennial publication of the FIGO Report on Gynecologic Cancer, and the initiation of the annual award for the best paper from a low-resource country. This annual award has proved to be very popular and appreciated. The international scope of the journal was expanded in 1991, with an arrangement with an Italian publisher to publish selected articles in Italian, and in 1998 with the publication of IJGO—India, and in 2000 with IJGO—China. One notable manuscript appeared in the March 2002 issue of the journal recording the first human uterine transplantation; this was given front-page coverage by *The New York Times* and was featured in *Time* magazine.[1] Professor Sciarra's editorship of IJGO continued until 2006, when Professor Timothy Johnson of Ann Arbor, Michigan, a senior member of the editorial board, was appointed the fourth Editor, and the editorial office moved to its present home at FIGO House in London, England.

2 | TIMOTHY R.B. JOHNSON, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, 2007–2014

I was lucky enough to learn at the feet of a master when Professor Jack Sciarra asked me to join his IJGO editorial team in 1995. Our paths had first crossed when we served as ACOG representatives on the Carnegie Corporation of New York's Ghana Postgraduate Training Programme in Obstetrics and Gynecology External Advisory Board. In addition to learning the editorial ropes, I got to co-edit a new section of the journal—"Contemporary Issues in Women's Health"—envisioned by former Editor Harold Kaminetzky. Together with Sabaratnam Arulkumaran, and subsequently Richard Adanu, we enhanced the journal's focus on real-life, up-to-the-moment women's health issues.

The day I inherited the mantle of Editor-in-Chief in 2007 was a landmark for IJGO: the editorial office moved to London, in space

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shared with the FIGO secretariat, and simultaneously the journal moved to an electronic submission and publication system. Clare Addington directed the new London editorial office professionally at every step, and our goal of expanding the global reach of both authors and reviewers was successfully achieved. I was able to edit the journal from my base in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the growth we hoped to encourage has continued with the journal's ongoing success. We continued accepting clinical articles reflecting the broad interests of FIGO's constituent societies, but also recognized our role as FIGO's official journal, publishing articles of public health, social, and policy importance in both obstetrics and gynecology and women's health. The impact and impact factor of the journal both increased. We also established important goals of diversity and equity in our author and reviewer bases and adopted important publication policies. One example I am most proud of is the policy requiring that local co-authors be included on all papers from low- and middle-income countries, supporting FIGO's priority of capacity building, as well as preventing the co-opting of research databases and opportunities by high-income countries.[2]

Submissions increased, publication time decreased, and the global diversity of submissions, authors, and reviewers increased—especially in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Latin America and the former Soviet Union remained challenges for soliciting submissions. The hard work of Clare Addington and the editorial office staff made our goal of seeing the transformation of the editorial office into the current FIGO Publications office a reality. I was also proud when a student and mentee of mine, Professor Richard Adanu, succeeded me as Editor-in-Chief in 2014, the first person from the Global South to hold this position.

In 2020–2021, the online submission and online publication format of IJGO afforded a special opportunity when Editor-in-Chief Michael Geary asked me to coordinate fast-track review of COVID-related articles, allowing this topical research to be published online as promptly as possible. IJGO was among the first journals to publish important articles on the impact of the pandemic on women's health and obstetric and gynecologic practice. Between February 25, 2020, and February 10, 2021, IJGO received over 230 submissions relating to COVID-19, of which 100 were published by March 2021. We identified a small team of highly dedicated reviewers and editors who were able to commit to rapid peer review turnaround while maintaining rigorous standards, and we were delighted to achieve a turnaround of under 1 week from submission to first decision on average, and under 24 days to final decision. The IJGO editorial team worked closely with copyeditors and Wiley's production department to fast-track the copyediting and typesetting of accepted papers, averaging under 5 days between acceptance and online publication.[3] We agreed with our partner publisher, Wiley, that all articles should be free to access so that the latest research and knowledge could be disseminated as widely as possible, and we grouped these together in our COVID-19 Virtual Issue, which currently remains free for all to access.[4,5]

3 | RICHARD ADANU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, 2014–2021

IJGO is a truly international journal, both in name and in practice. The journal continues to attract submissions from all regions of the world, and our reviewers are similarly international. Analysis of submitted manuscripts and published papers over the years has demonstrated that we have been successful in maintaining a similar regional distribution for both the submitted manuscripts and published papers. This shows that no particular region of the world receives preferential treatment in the publication of submitted manuscripts.

The import of the international nature of IJGO gained full recognition during my tenure as Editor-in-Chief, when the Editorial Board took the decision to introduce regional representation. This led to the selection of additional Associate Editors representing different regions of the world. Since IJGO is the official publication of FIGO, it is imperative that we maintain this international outlook. IJGO therefore highlights the best science from the different countries that are members of FIGO.

IJGO is also very interested in capacity building among authors and researchers, especially those from low- and middle-income countries who have limited access to resources for their career development. At each of the FIGO Congresses held in recent times, IJGO has had a session focusing on improving scientific writing skills and increasing authors' chances of getting published. These sessions have covered the ethics of publishing, basic research methods, and tips on how to navigate the peer review process. In the spirit of true partnership, a number of these sessions were held together with the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* and *Obstetrics and Gynecology* ("the Green Journal"). The educational role that scientific journals ought to play in developing new researchers is sometimes overlooked, so IJGO must continue to play a leading role in this, and to serve as a convening point where different journals come together to work on raising the next generation of researchers.

IJGO has become a highly respected women's health journal throughout the world. This has been achieved through the hard work of all the different Editors and Editorial Board members over the years. The partnership between the journal and the FIGO expert committees, which results in widely read and widely downloaded publications on practice guidance among other topics, has been a major contributor to this achievement. IJGO must continue working closely with the FIGO committees so that the journal serves as the home for all FIGO guidance and expert statements.

4 | ELIZABETH STRINGER, DEPUTY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, 2021–

I joined IJGO in 2017 as the Public Health Obstetric Consultant, and was honored to become the first Deputy Editor-in-Chief—and the first female Deputy Editor-in-Chief—in 2021. Since then, I have witnessed expansion of the Editorial Board to ensure greater global

representation. This expansion has brought increased diversity in perspectives and expertise to the journal, enhancing the quality and breadth of published research. IJGO has also forged partnerships with the World Association for Trainees in Obstetrics and Gynecology, welcoming two Associate Editors from this global organization. This collaboration brings fresh perspectives and insights from trainees and young researchers, ensuring that IJGO remains at the forefront of emerging trends and developments in the field. It is clear to me that IJGO's commitment to supporting and promoting burgeoning researchers remains unwavering. With increased training initiatives for junior researchers and editors, IJGO is actively investing in the professional growth and development of the next generation, further enhancing the journal's editorial capabilities and the quality of published content.

In addition to the aforementioned positive changes, IJGO continues to place a strong emphasis on promoting researchers from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Recognizing the importance of equitable access to scientific publishing and the valuable contributions made by researchers from diverse backgrounds, IJGO has implemented initiatives to support and amplify the voices of researchers from LMICs.

Finally, at a time when women's access to full-scope reproductive rights increasingly appears to be challenged, IJGO stands as a journal dedicated to advocating for women's rights and highlighting researchers who actively support women's health. With an unwavering commitment to progress, IJGO continues to amplify the voices of those who champion comprehensive reproductive healthcare. I am nothing but honored and proud to be a part of IJGO.

5 | MICHAEL GEARY, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, 2021–

I was honored to be appointed as Editor-in-Chief for IJGO when I succeeded Richard Adanu in January 2021. Richard increased the success and profile of our journal during his tenure, and I enjoyed working with and learning from him. I initially became a member of the IJGO Editorial Board in 2015 when I was working in Toronto, and I acted as the North American representative on the board. I was also part of the team of Associate Editors working on the Contemporary Issues in Women's Health section of the journal from 2017. In late 2017 I moved home to work in Ireland.

When I was appointed as Editor-in-Chief I had several key goals. My initial aim was to extend and broaden the readership of the journal, in other words to "widen the circle of friends" of IJGO. My clear objective was to continue the great work of my predecessors and to continue to encourage the next generation of researchers, in both clinical and academic research. I believe that one of the key strategies of the journal has been to support researchers from low- and middle-income countries, and this is an approach that must continue into the future. IJGO has come a long way since its inception in 1963. It has a very wide reach, across all continents of the globe. It has provided a forum for all types of researchers, from those starting out in their careers to those who are at the very highest level of research expertise. It has facilitated publication of research from very small units, with minimal or no funding, to those affiliated with premier universities of the highest ranking. Most importantly, it has provided a voice for women and children by publishing work that has had a direct impact on patient care.

My second goal was to enhance our impact factor. The journal has traditionally performed very well and the impact factor has increased steadily over time, standing at 2.216 at the time of my appointment. Our target was to increase this to 3.0 within 3 years, and possibly to further increase towards 5.0 within 5 years.

At the outset, my third goal to increase the Editorial Board membership was approved by FIGO, and I am pleased to say that we now have two board members from each of the five FIGO geographical regions. I also wanted to ensure gender balance, and I am pleased to say that we now have equal gender membership on our board. FIGO also supported my proposal to appoint a first Deputy Editor-in-Chief, and I was delighted when Elizabeth Stringer was appointed to this role in 2020. As a team, we are also enthusiastic about supporting the next generation of academic trainees. Our proposal to appoint trainee editors was again met with resounding approval by our board and by FIGO. We appointed two WATOG representatives, Goknur Topçu and Priyankur Roy, again ensuring gender balance. Both have been wonderful additions to our board.

Through significant teamwork and tremendous support from Amy Goggins (Head of Publishing) and her team, the journal has expanded hugely over the last 3 years. The number of submissions has dramatically increased from around 1300 papers per year to around 2000 or more new submissions each year. We have increased the number of special issues and supplements published in IJGO, too. Our ability to be really nimble, flexible, and responsive during the pandemic allowed the journal to publish breaking research around COVID-19 very quickly and ahead of our competitor journals. I am particularly grateful to Timothy Johnson, Richard Adanu, and the IJGO editorial office team for their sterling work during this unprecedented time. As a result of all of this, our impact factor rose to 3.561 in 2020, and further to 4.447 in 2021. 2021 saw a general trend of journal impact factors increasing rapidly due to a change in the calculation algorithm, followed by a moderate drop, and in 2022 the journal's impact factor has leveled off to 3.8. A better marker of our progress perhaps is our improved ranking among the 85 main journals in our specialty of Obstetrics & Gynecology, to 21/85 in 2022. We will work to improve this further over time.

In 2022 we introduced the concept of a cascade journal, and partnered with the journal *Reproductive, Female and Child Health*. This project will inevitably take time to develop, but the early signs are that this is a positive step for our journal.

We have a clear goal to increase the number of open access articles published in IJGO so that our authors are assured of the widest possible circulation, and so that readers do not face barriers to accessing important research and reviews. IJGO now publishes all guidance papers from FIGO's committees open access, and the proportion of open access publications in the journal has increased significantly year on year, from 8% in 2019 to 30% in 2023 year-to-date.

Over the past few years, research integrity has become a major focus for all of us involved in medical research. Sadly, this has also proved to be an issue in Obstetrics & Gynecology, and all of the major OBGYN journals are grappling with this problem—IJGO is no exception. As the volume of published medical research articles continues to expand, so too do the occurrences of errors and outright research and publication misconduct. It is important for all stakeholders in medical research to take an active role in identifying possible errors, misconduct, and manipulation of the publication process. To combat this, IJGO appointed Pat Dicker to our Editorial Board in 2022 as Research Integrity Editor. We have also recruited additional colleagues with forensic expertise to conduct research integrity reviews, and to review any "flagged" publications as they are brought to our attention. We have been instrumental in coordinating an ad hoc group of journal editors in the fields of obstetrics, gynecology, women's health, and related topics. We started to meet monthly in September 2022, to collectively focus on the problem of manuscripts with flawed or fabricated data, or other types of misconduct. Although our initial focus has been on randomized controlled trials and systematic reviews with or without meta-analysis, the principles apply across all methodologies. A joint editorial captures the work that has been done in this area, and this has been jointly published in IJGO, BJOG, AJOG MFM, and ANZJOG.[6] We have agreed updates to our various author guidelines and new submission checking processes—particularly for RCTs—which will be common to all journals that have participated in the process. We have collaborated closely with COPE. As a group of editors, we are committed to making significant progress in this area and our aim is to improve the trustworthiness of published data in women's health research.

Over the next few years, our goal is to build on the great work done by our predecessors and by our current team. I look forward to continuing to work with the journal's editorial team, our Editorial Board, my colleagues at FIGO, and all of my colleagues and friends associated with IJGO.

The fact that IJGO is the academic/journal arm of FIGO is incredibly important, and it maintains that essence of being part of the global voice for women's health. We will remain true to our mission and vision whilst striving for further improvements and successes.

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