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PROGRESS OF THE UKRAINIAN BIOCHEMICAL JOURNAL THANKS TO COLLABORATION WITH RECOOP HST ASSOCIATION

M. GRIGORIEVA[1]✉, V. CHERNYSHENKO[1], S. VARI[2]

[1]Palladin Institute of Biochemistry, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv;
[2]International Research and Innovation in Medicine Program, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA, USA, and President of the RECOOP HST Association;
✉e-mail: mayagrigorieva@gmail.com

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The article examines the impact of cooperation between The Ukrainian Biochemical Journal (UBJ) and the international association RECOOP HST on the journal's development in 2019-2023. During this period, 324 articles were published in the journal. Most of them are written by Ukrainian authors (79.9%). Foreign authors (20.1%) are representatives of 15 countries. An online manuscript handling and reviewing system were implemented on the journal's website, which increased the number of articles received by the editorial office and allowed for a more careful selection of manuscripts at the initial evaluation stage. As a result, the percentage of rejected manuscripts increased from 36.5 to 67.7%. RECOOP's support has also played a key role in improving the quality of UBJ's publications through the renewal of its editorial board and expanding its international reviewer base. In collaboration with RECOOP, eight special issues of UBJ were produced separately, including four themed issues. In total, 56 articles (110 citations) were published in these issues. The number of visitors to UBJ's website almost tripled during the mentioned period. Currently, UBJ's Scimago Scientific Journal Rank (SJR) for 2022/2023 is 0.169, the h-index is 20, and the Impact Score is 0.63. A conclusion is made that the cooperation with RECOOP contributed to the publication of better scientific articles, the involvement of highly qualified experts in the peer review process, and stricter adherence by the journal to the fundamental provisions and ethical standards, thereby leading to an elevation in UBJ's rating and recognition in the global scientific arena.

K e y w o r d s: UBJ, RECOOP, COMET, project implementation, thematic issue, increasing UBJ's global visibility.

The Ukrainian Biochemical Journal (UBJ), the oldest biochemical journal in Ukraine, established in 1926 [1], addresses crucial fundamental and research aspects within various biochemistry fields, as well as scientific advancements in related areas such as bioorganic chemistry, molecular biology, immunology, biophysics, pharmacology, genetics, and medicine.

Throughout its nearly century-long existence, the journal has undergone numerous changes. These include modifications to its title and language of publication, which have encompassed German, Russian, Ukrainian, and English; generations of renowned scientists who served on the journal's Editorial Board [2-6]; refining stipulations for article submissions, review procedures, and article layout and design; etc [7].

A significant milestone in the journal's evolution was its collaboration with the international association RECOOP HST [8].

Results and Discussion

In October 2018, UBJ received a grant from RECOOP to implement the project "Scientific Communication of RECOOP Partners Using the UBJ Platform." Its main objective was to enhance the journal's quality to meet international standards, expand its global reach, and establish it as a reliable platform for RECOOP's publishing activities in Eastern Europe by promoting articles as part of RECOOP's research strategy [9].

At that time, UBJ's key strengths included its presence in international databases, publishing articles in English, regular issue releases, and single-blind peer reviews for manuscripts.

The ways to achieve the project goals were identified as follows: (i) incorporating an online manuscript handling and reviewing system, known as COMET Journal Edition, on the journal's website; (ii) improving the English editing of articles; and (iii) preparing thematic issues of UBJ.

Following consultations with COMET representatives and the assessment of the system's demo version, adjustments were made to its functionality, different user types developed, and various scenarios simulated, such as situations where the author has not uploaded some essential documents, or when a manuscript is rejected, when a reviewer refuses to review the manuscript, etc. In July 2019, the Institute of Biochemistry (a UBJ co-publisher), RECOOP, and COMET signed a tripartite cooperation agreement.

The implementation of the automated manuscript handling system significantly reduced the time from article submission to publishing decision to just three to four months, down from the previous duration of six months to a year.

Over five years since the RECOOP-sponsored COMET implementation, the submission of manuscripts to UBJ has grown by 50% compared to five pre-COMET years. The increased number of submitted articles allowed for a stricter approach to selecting manuscripts as early as the initial evaluation stage. As a result, the percentage of rejected manuscripts increased from 36.5 to 67.7% (Fig. 1).

RECOOP's support has been instrumental in enhancing the quality of UBJ publications by transforming the UBJ Editorial Board, targeting rejuvenation and bolstering the medical aspect, while broadening the international pool of reviewers.

There has been a significant expansion in the geographical scope of authors submitting their manuscripts to UBJ. Before the project's implementation, nearly all of the authors were affiliated with scientific institutions in Ukraine. However, from 2019 to 2023, out of the 324 articles published in the journal, 20.1% were contributed by foreign authors from 15 countries, including Azerbaijan, Algeria, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran (pre-conflict), China, Macedonia, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Poland, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

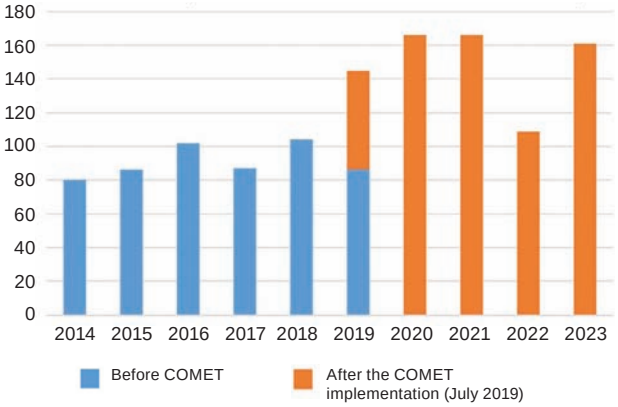

Fig. 1. Manuscripts submitted to UBJ before and after the COMET implementation

UBJ, in partnership with RECOOP and under its guidance, produced eight issues, including several thematic issues:

• Clinical Research, Translational Medicine and Drug Development (2020; 93(2), Mar-Apr);

• Molecular and Clinical Studies of Hemostasis (2020; 92(3), May-Jun);

• Reproductive and Child Health (2023; 95(3), May-Jun);

• Metabolic and Cardiovascular Diseases (2024; 96(2), Mar-Apr).

The eight issues contained a total of 56 papers, which have collectively generated 110 citations.

Fig. 2. Visitors to the UBJ website

After the RECOOP-funded project was launched, the number of visitors to the UBJ website significantly increased. Between 2018 and 2022, the annual count of visitors increased threefold, soaring from 78,306 to 229,915 per annum (Fig. 2).

The decline in numbers in 2020/2021 can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, while the further decrease in 2022 resulted from the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Despite these challenges, the wartime number of visitors to the UBJ site exceeds by far that of before RECOOP-funded COMET implementation and has begun to grow again.

The collaboration with RECOOP has led to an increase in UBJ's Cite Score, from 0.47 in 2018 to 1.3 in 2022. Furthermore, UBJ has been included in additional abstract databases, such as Web of Science (Biological Abstracts, Biosis Previews), March 2019, and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), October 2023. (UBJ has been indexed in the world's largest abstract database, Scopus, Since 1978.)

As of 2022/2023, UBJ holds a Scimago Scientific Journal Rank (SJR) of 0.169, an h-index of 20, and an Impact Score of 0.63 [10].

Conclusions. The collaboration with RECOOP has enhanced the quality of scientific articles published in UBJ, helped to engage highly qualified experts in rigorous peer review, and reinforced compliance with the journal's essential principles and ethical standards, boosting UBJ's rating and recognition. Our commitment to upholding international standards drives our efforts to expand onto the European arena and facilitate the dissemination of research outcomes across diverse life science domains.

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ПРОГРЕС THE UKRAINIAN BIOCHEMICAL JOURNAL У СПІВПРАЦІ З АСОЦІАЦІЄЮ RECOOP HST

М. Григор'єва[1]✉, *В. Чернишенко*[1], *Ш. Варі*[2]

[1]Інститут біохімії ім. О. В. Палладіна НАН України, Київ;
[2]Міжнародна програма досліджень та інновацій у медицині, Медичний центр Cedars-Sinai, Лос-Анджелес, Каліфорнія, США, та президент Асоціації RECOOP HST;
✉e-mail: mvgrigorieva@biochem.kiev.ua

У статті розглянуто вплив співпраці *The Ukrainian Biochemical Journal* (UBJ) з міжнародною асоціацією RECOOP HST на розвиток журналу в 2019-2023 рр. У цей період у журналі було опубліковано 324 статті. Переважна більшість із них написана українськими авторами (79,9%). Іноземні автори (20,1%) є представниками 15 країн. На вебсайті журналу було імплементовано онлайн-систему для обробки та рецензування рукописів, що збільшило надходження статей до редакції та дозволило ретельніше відбирати рукописи ще на етапі первинної оцінки. Як результат, відсоток відхилених рукописів виріс із 36,5 до 67,7. Підтримка RECOOP також відіграла ключову роль у покращенні якості публікацій UBJ завдяки оновленню редакційної ради, а також розширенню міжнародної бази рецензентів. У співпраці з RECOOP було окремо підготовлено вісім спеціальних випусків UBJ, включно з чотирма тематичними номерами. Загалом у цих номерах опубліковано 56 статей (110 цитувань). Кількість відвідувачів веб-сайту UBJ за зазначений період майже потроїлася. Наразі показники Scimago Journal (SJR) за 2022/2023 рр. становить 0,169, h-індекс 20, а оцінка впливу 0,63. Зроблено висновок, що співпраця з RECOOP сприяла публікації якісніших наукових статей, залученню висококласних спеціалістів до процесу рецензування і суворішому дотриманню журна-

лом основних положень та етичних стандартів, а отже підвищенню рейтингу і впізнаваності UBJ у світовому науковому просторі.

Ключові слова: UBJ, RECOOP, COMET, тематичні випуски, глобальна впізнаваність.

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