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Innovative Surgical Sciences: more than just another new open access journal

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In the last two decades, digitalization and its integration in everyday life have had major influences on our lives. At the same time, digital technologies have gained a significant importance in medicine. The same holds true for scientific communication. These developments have been accompanied by increased social demands for transparency and a free access to information. Subsequently, various initiatives such as the Berlin Declaration on Open Access argue for a widely and readily available dissemination of knowledge to society via the Internet. In the Berlin Declaration, open access is defined “as a comprehensive source of human knowledge and cultural heritage that has been approved by the scientific community” [1]. On this basis and despite some reservations, open access publication has attained more and more attraction in recent years. According to the Directory of Open Access Journals, 11,578 journals with almost 2.3 million articles exist currently in 136 countries worldwide, with 7243 journals searchable at the article level [2]. In medicine, more than 700,000 articles are available, and the numbers increase day by day. These figures reflect the great dynamics in the field of scientific open access publishing on the one hand and the potential economic relevance with estimated revenues of 452 million dollars for the publishing industry on the other hand [3].

These developments encouraged the German Society of Surgery (GSS) to establish its own open access journal. Additionally, the GSS intends to create value for its current and future members and to foster the identity with the GSS. Due to the already huge amount of open access journals and because of the current relevance of the impact factor for a scientific career, at least in Germany, *Innovative Surgical Sciences* was challenged and the question arose: Why another open access journal?

Founded in 1872, and therefore one of the oldest scientific medical societies in the world, the GSS has discussed throughout its 144-year history the establishment of its own scientific journal. Mainly due to logistic and economic considerations as well as the increasing

surgical specialization in the last 20–30 years, this dream never came true. The advancements of digital publication, the perspective of decreased future financial burden in digitalization and the overwhelming belief of the various surgical societies within the GSS in “one” surgical society, which generates greater political and social acceptance and influence, made *Innovative Surgical Sciences* a reality. Additionally, the publisher De Gruyter became interested in the project. Following various negotiations with the publisher and after several meetings of a GSS working group with the representatives of all surgical specialties, the Board of Directors of the GSS agreed to *Innovative Surgical Sciences*, which was then launched on January 1, 2016 [4].

Published under a Creative Commons License 4.0, there are several features that separate *Innovative Surgical Sciences* from other open access journals:

- The journal, all copyrights, as well as the title of the journal are owned by the GSS.
- All manuscripts are subject to a double-blind peer-review process. The review process is aimed to be as short as possible, allowing a first decision within 30 days after the submission of the article.
- After acceptance, the article will be published online within 3 weeks.
- To meet the criteria of maximal transparency, a supplemental publication of the peer-review assessments together with the article is guaranteed either anonymously or by name if wished.
- The GSS will cover the article processing charges for 3 years. This is considered as an investment in the future and refers to all members of the GSS as well as invited manuscripts.
- The article copyright stays with the author.

Additionally, all authors will benefit from an international editorial board. The GSS feels honored that numerous renowned personalities from all over the world accepted the invitation to work actively as members of the editorial board. On the occasion of this editorial, the GSS thanks all the members of the editorial board

for their support and their efforts to *Innovative Surgical Sciences*.

The quotation “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.” [5] by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry may hold true for the GSS and its own journal, *Innovative Surgical Sciences*. The GSS believes in the future of digital publication and will therefore consequently follow the road map of open access publication. As an obvious sign for this vision, the GSS signed the Berlin Declaration as the first Germany-based scientific medical society on October 26, 2015 [6]. Although 144 years old, the GSS is a young and modern surgical society focusing on the interests of its members and the purposes of modern surgery for the best available surgical care. In this respect, the GSS supports the claim for transparency, which is also crucial for randomized controlled surgical trials, as it is reported in the first article submitted to and published in *Innovative Surgical Sciences* [7]. We are sure that open access will ultimately change the current approach of scientific evaluation [8–10]. Other metrics than just the impact factor will be relevant for scientific qualification and for a career in scientific surgery [11]. *Innovative Surgical Sciences* is just a small step within the global world of surgical journals, but it is a milestone for the GSS and German surgery. We invite you to actively participate in the future development of *Innovative Surgical Sciences*. As Editor-in-Chief, I can assure you on behalf of the editorial board that we will do our utmost to support you and to make *Innovative Surgical Sciences* successful. So please join us to create a valuable future for surgery, surgeons and patients.

Author Statement

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of Surgery. **Material and Methods:** Informed consent: Informed consent is not applicable. **Ethical approval:** The conducted research is not related to either human or animals use.

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Article note: Some of the statements in this editorial reflect the thoughts and convictions of the author and do not necessarily represent the decisions and opinions of all board members of the GSS.