

# Open Access Publishing: Barriers, Challenges and a Window of Opportunity

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The present internet era has created a myriad of opportunities; perhaps the most useful of them is efficient and widespread dissemination of scientific knowledge. The access limitations conferred by the traditional subscription journals have allowed open access journals to flourish. However, besides creating the window of opportunities, the logarithmic growth of open access journals have posed distinct challenges and raised fundamental questions. Recently, top-notch subscription journals including NEJM, Nature, and Science published several articles highlighting the downsides associated with traditional open access publishing [1-4]. The editorial team of JPMS has constantly reviewed its policies to ensure that we provide our audience with the best content, maximally capitalizing the benefits while avoiding the pitfalls of open access publishing.

Most critique on open access publications has been the sub-standard quality of the manuscripts being published. The question is what pushes the editors to proceed with a low quality manuscript? We believe that there are two major incentives. First, journals need to publish issues at specified intervals to sustain themselves. Thus, if the predominance of the manuscripts are sub-standard, the editors are likely to publish some of those to maintain their publication. The below par publication sets a precedence for other authors, culminating in decreased standard of the journal. Since our inception, we have not compromised on the standard of the journal, regardless of the number of manuscripts we publish. This is evident from the fact that the journal has gained greater audience with the passage of time, has grown in stature and has continued to be cited by other peer reviewed journals.

Going a step ahead, the editorial team has now decided to publish articles as soon as they are accepted, without waiting for an "issue". Whatever we will publish in 3 months will constitute an issue; the latter is being done for the sake of indexations. This strategy will enable us

greater leverage over our decisions, while removing the pressure of deadlines imposed by an issue release. We would like to emphasize that the limitation to publish a minimum number of articles is not specific for open access publications as it holds true for the subscription journals as well.

Secondly, journals need monetary assistance to establish and flourish. In essence, journals serve who pays them. Again, depending upon the nature of journal, the payments are derived from readers (subscription journals) or authors (open access). Thus it would be logical to assume that open access journals have an inherent incentive for publishing more manuscripts. The entire team of JPMS, ranging from peer reviewers to the graphical layout designer comprises of dedicated volunteers for science. Thus, throughout our publication history this caveat has not affected us, as we do not charge publication fees. Hence our editorial decisions are entirely independent of whether the authors pay or not.

We have recently decided to charge the authors to help us handle increased flow of article, to maintain and improve the quality of service we provide to authors, and to publish manuscripts in a timely fashion. The publication charges will enable us to hire staff for clerical purposes, ensuring that our scientific team is entirely devoted towards journal development. However, the decision of our editorial team, higher management team, and peer reviewers will continue to work on a voluntary basis and will not be influenced by the monetary input. Finally, the authors of accepted articles will be eligible for a full waiver if exceptional circumstances exist and no manuscript will be denied publication, merely for monetary reasons.

Open access has its barriers and challenges; however rigorous editorial policies can transform these disadvantages into an opportunity. At JPMS, we volunteer our time to serve science and the above editorial is an attempt to emphasize our mission.

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