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BRIEF COMMUNICATION

Lack of Funds for Publications form a Threat to Young Medical Authors

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Abstract

Background: Young medical authors face several problems. One of them is their common limited access to funds that may be used to pay the Article Processing Charges (APC) of medical journals.

Objectives: It is investigated whether the APCs are high, indeed, and – if so – how this problem for young authors can be tackled.

Significance: It is important that good research is published in reliable and well-read journals. Measures should therefore be taken to avoid that young researchers publish in journals that are not or hardly read, only because they offer low APCs.

Methodology: Analysis of the APCs of medical journals is carried out by searching for the APC on the website of the hundreds of journals that approached the present authors during one year with a request to submit a manuscript.

Results: It is found that most journals have APCs that are too high for junior authors to pay personally. Almost all journals with an affordable APC have a quality below internationally acceptable standards and are not or hardly read (or cited). Young authors commonly see the advantages of publishing in low-APC journals on the short term, but they can difficultly overview the disadvantages on the longer term. This makes the 'battle' against low-quality journals difficult.

Conclusions: Young authors should be warned that choosing a journal on the basis of a low APC may affect their scientific reputation. All medical institutes and organizations where research is carried out should develop a procedure that enables young authors to avoid publishing in low-quality journals, by supplying grants to cover the APC asked by appropriate high-quality journals.

Introduction

Each experienced researcher has once (co) authored his/her first article. Commonly this is a Ph.D. thesis, which tends to have been reviewed extensively by a supervisor, who also may be presumed to have helped the young scientist with instructions how to write a good scientific manuscript. In the course of time, experience grows and writing becomes more easy, though commonly still a hard work.

The first manuscripts submitted by a young researcher or practitioner tend to receive severe criticism by the reviewers. The criticism commonly

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regards both the science and the presentation. Revising the original manuscript, which took already so much effort from the young scientist, is – as a rule – considered a nuisance. It takes much time and much effort, and there is no guarantee that the revised manuscript will be accepted. If also a second and a third revision are required, which is not uncommon, particularly in the case of high-ranking journals [1], the author may even doubt whether publication of his/her study is worth all the time, effort and disappointment.

All researchers, including young ones, will agree that critical reviews are essential for the quality of a publication and, in more general terms, for the trustworthiness of science. This holds certainly for medical publications, because a lack of critical comments by reviewers may easily lead to low-quality, biased or even fraudulent publications [2]. Unfortunately, medical publications form the largest group of papers in which fraud was discovered after publication [3,4]. This poses a severe threat to public health, as treatments or medicines may be prescribed on the basis of literature with a dubious quality. Choosing an appropriate journal becomes ever more difficult, however, because of the rapidly increasing number of new (particularly medical) journals (Figure 1). This growth is exemplified by the launching of numerous journals that approached us with requests to contribute a manuscript (Table 1).

Young vs. established authors

It is well known that the medical community as a whole is relatively conservative, so that manuscripts of young researchers or practitioners with new ideas that might represent true breakthroughs in medicine are commonly reviewed more critically than manuscripts with 'classical' reports submitted by established colleagues. Consequently, a young researcher may easily become so annoyed by successive requests to revise a manuscript that he/she may decide to stop trying to have the material published, however interesting it may be for the medical community. Such a decision is not easy, but there is a second reason for young researchers to come to such a decision: the (often high) Article Processing Charges (APC) that most journals ask nowadays (Table 1). They can do so because of the publish-or-perish culture [5], introduced by managers at universities and other research organizations some 15-20 years ago. It is this management attitude that must be held responsible for the recent tsunami of new (mostly medical) journals that overflow the scientific community.

It is obvious from table 1 that there is a wide spreading in the heights of the APCs, but most journals ask APCs that must be considered far too high to be paid by young scientists (and practitioners!) personally (Figure 2). Journals may waive the APC (in whole or in part), but this is often a decision taken by the publisher (rather than by the journal's Editor-in-Chief) and the author who applied for waiving is left in doubt about the decision commonly for a long time. Moreover, many journals tend to receive more manuscripts than they can publish, which obviously

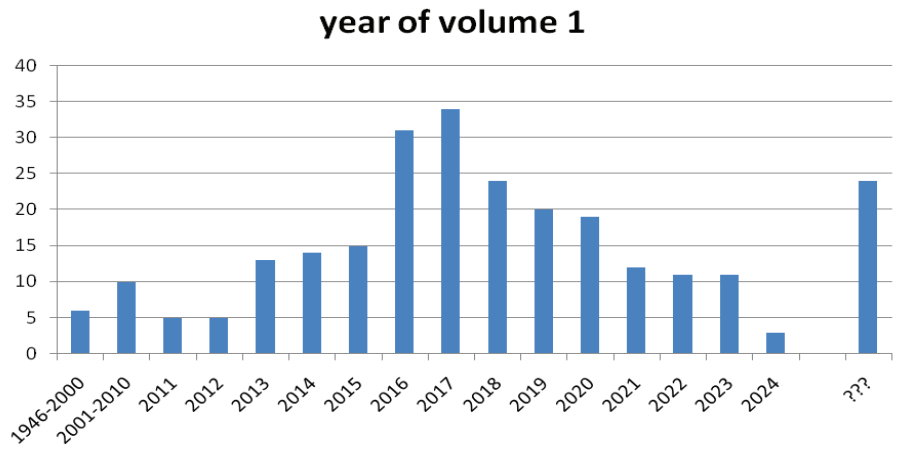

Figure 1 Years in which the first article, issue or volume was published in the numerous medical journals that invited the present authors in the past year to contribute. The growth of the number of journals is evident, but seems to slow down; it should be realized, however, that new journals need much time to collect names and email addresses of potential authors. Question marks indicate that the journal's website does not allow tracing the year of the first volume.

Table 1: Alphabetical list of journals that approached the present authors during a year with the request to submit a manuscript. The authors were supposed to pay article processing costs. Where a range is indicated, the APC depends on the author's country and on the type of publication (research article, review article, etc.). The indicated fees may change in time; in this list, they indicate the APC at the day that the authors received a request from the journal. The numerous journals that mention an APC but do not indicate its height are not included m this list.

Journal Title	ISSN	APC (US$)
Academia Journal of Medicinal Plants	2315-7720	1500
Advances in Bioengineering and Biomedical Science Research	2640-4133	2585
Advances in Complementary & Alternative Medicine	2637-7802	633-1999
Advances in Medical Sciences	1896-1126	0-1700
Advances on Preventive Medicine and Health Care	2688-996X	560-4060
American Journal of Biomedical Science & Research	2642-1747	1879-2579
American Journal of Medicine and Medical Sciences	2165-9036	150-360
American Journal of Medicine and Public Health	2771-943X	1800-3600
Anesthesia and Critical Care	2687-7996	500-2000
Annals of Biomedical Science and Engineering	2833-518X	1549
Annals of Case Reports	2574-7754	1560-3960
Annals of Case Reports and Clinical Studies	2834-5673	1800-3600
Annals of Clinical Case Reports	2474-1655	1800-3600
Annals of Clinical Oncology and Cancer Research	none	1800-3600
Annals of Clinical Toxicology	2641-905X	1800-3600
Annals of Environmental Science and Toxicology	2641-2969	1049-1549
Annals of Musculoskeletal Medicine	2640-8139	1049-1549
Annals of Nursing and Practice	2379-9501	720-3600
Annals of Orthopedics and Musculoskeletal Disorders	2638-3586	1800-3600
Annals of Promeotics and Bioinformatics	2640-2831	1549
Annals of Public Health	2831-6193	250
Annals of Reviews & Research	2641-8320	1080-2480
Annals of Short Reports	2640-6691	1800-3600
Annals of Sports and Exercise Medicine	none	1950
Annals of Sports Medicine and Research	2379-0571	720-3600
Archives of Clinical Trials	2768-4598	2000
Archives of Clinical and Biomedical Research	2572-5017	900-2500
Archives of Clinical and Medical Case Reports	2575-9655	500-3000
Archives of Epidemiology and Public Health	2633-1411	3200
Archives of Medical Research	0188-4409	0-2750
Archives of Preventive Medicine	2640-7868	1049-1549
Archives of Rheumatology & Arthritis Research	2694-1724	649-1780
Archives of Surgery and Clinical Research	2576-9537	2589
ARC Journal of Cancer Science	2455-6009	75-450
Asian Journal of Complementary and Alternative Medicine	2347-3894	3019
Autism-Open Access	2165-7890	1519-2200
Biomedical and Translational Science	2768-4911	2000
Biomedical Genetics and Genomics	2398-5399	1290 GBP
Biomedical Journal of Scientific & Technical Research	2574-1241	1599
Biomedical Research Journal	2349-3674	400
Biomedical Research and Reviews	2515-9186	1380
Case Reports and Reviews	2693-1516	1500
CEOS Obstetrics and Gynecology	none	1890
CEOS Sports Medicine and Research	none	1890
Clinical and Medical Investigations	2398-5763	3690
Clinical Case Reports International	2638-4558	1800-3600
Clinical Case Reports and Reviews	2059-0393	2890
Clinical Medicine Insights: Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Disorders	1179-5441	1700
Clinical Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Medicine	2059-4828	1500
Clinical Sciences Research and Reports	2516-709X	500
Clinics in Medicine and Medical Research	none	1800-3600
Clinics in Surgery	2474-1647	1985-3600
CMJ Medicine	none	1800-3600
CMJ Open Journal	none	1800-3600
COJ Nursing & Healthcare	2577-2007	633-1999
Current Research in Complementary & Alternative Medicine	2577-2201	360-2060
Current Trends in Biomedical Engineering and Biosciences	2572-1151	1080-1898
Current Trends in Internal Medicine	2638-003X	560-1650
eHealth Sciences	none	625
Emergency Medicine: Open Access	2165-7548	2200
Environment and Social Psychology	2424-8975	1500
Epidemiology and Public Health	none	500
European Journal of Translational Myology	2037-7460	350
Examines in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	2637-7934	633-1999
Frontiers in Medical Case Reports	2582-8142	GBP 1200
Frontiers in Medicine and Health Research	2817-2108	1069
Frontiers in Pain Research	2673-561X	490-2125
Frontiers in Rehabilitation Sciences	2673-6861	490-2125
Frontiers in Surgery	2296-875X	490-3295
Frontiers in Women's Health	2398-2799	3999

Subject Area(s): ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

Global Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities	2575-8586	1080-2480
Global Medicine and Therapeutics	2516-7065	499
Healthcare	2227-9032	CHF 2700
Health Education and Care	2398-8517	500
Indian Journal of Science and Technology	0974-6846	250
Innovative Journal of Medical and Health Sciences	2277-4939	120
Insights on the Depression and Anxiety	2640-2882	1849
Internal Medicine and Care	2515-1061	500
Internal Medicine: Open Access	2165-8048	2200
International Clinical and Medical Case Reports Journal	2832-5788	1800-3600
International Journal of Alternative, Complementary & Integrative Medicine	none	1800-3600
International Journal of Alzheimer's Disease Research	none	2019
International Journal of Biomedical Engineering and Clinical Science	2471-1301	970
International Journal of Cancer, Clinical Inventions and Experimental Oncology	2059-1179	100
International Journal of Clinical and Medical Education Research	2832-7705	2519
International Journal of Clinical Case Reports and Reviews	2690-4861	399-1999
International Journal of Dental and Medical Sciences Research	2582-6018	50
International Journal of Nursing and Health Care Research	2688-9501	560-3560
International Journal of Nursing, Midwife and Health Related Cases	2397-0766	100
International Journal of Pharmaceutical Research and Applications	2249-7781	25
International Journal of Pharmaceutical Science Invention	2319-6718	75
Journal of Plastic Surgery	2771-9456	1800-3600
International Journal on Biomedical Research and Technology	none	323-1374
IOSR Journal of Dental and Medical Sciences	2279-0853	75
IOSR Journal of Nursing and Health Science	2320-1959	75
IOSR Journal of Pharmacy	2250-3013	75
IOSR Journal of Pharmacy and Biological Science	2278-3008	75
IOSR Journal of Sports and Physical Education	2347-6737	75
Journal of Addiction Medicine and Therapeutic Science	2455-3484	1049-1549
Journal of Alternative, Complementary & Integrative Medicine	2470-7562	3019
Journal of Alzheimers Disease and Parkinsonism	2161-0460	2200
Journal of Autism and Epilepsy	2641-7774	720-3600
Journal of Behavior	2576-0076	720-3600
Journal of Bioequivalence & Bioavailability	0975-0851	2200-2500
Journal of Bioinformatics and Comparative Genomics	2694-037X	1789
Journal of Biomedical Engineering & Biosciences	2564-4998	400
Journal of Biotechnology and Bioresearch	2643-704X	633-1999
Journal of CAM Research Progress	none	150
Journal of Cardiology	0914-5087	0-3000
Journal of Clinical Case Reports	2165-7920	2200
Journal of Case Reports and Medical History	2831-7416	249-1049
Journal of Case Reports and Studies	none	3800
Journal of Child and Adolescent Health	none	599
Journal of Clinical Immunology and Immunotherapy	2378-8844	2019
Journal of Clinical Investigation and Studies	2631-4002	400
Journal of Clinical, Medical and Experimental Images	2573-7708	1849
Journal of Clinical Medicine: Current Research	2832-7551	1219
Journal of Clinical Ophthalmology and Eye Disorders	2644-0385	1800-3600
Journal of Clinical Surgery Care Research	none	1519
Journal of Clinical Trials and Case Studies	none	519
Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health	2577-2228	760-3560
Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health Reports	2692-9899	149-1249
Journal of Complementary Medicine & Alternative Healthcare	2572-1232	1018-1898
Journal of Complementary and Alternative Medicine Research	2456-6276	500
Journal of Exercise, Sports & Orthopedics	2372-0972	1599
Journal of Fractures and Sprains	2578-3831	630-3600
Journal of Genetic Diseases and Therapeutics	none	1889
Journal of Genetic and Heridatary Case Studies	none	2280
Journal of Genetic and Heridatory Research	none	1200
Journal of Genetic Mutation Disorders	none	1800
Journal of Gynecology and Womens Health	2474-7602	1080-2480
Journal of Human Genetics and Genomic Medicine	2768-1521	2280
Journal of Immunology Research and Infectious Diseases	2771-4691	1219
Journal of Infectious Diseases and Microbiology	none	1500
Journal of Integrsated Health	2583-5386	1555

Subject Area(s): ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

Journal of Internal Medicine and Emergency Research	2582-7367)	1519
Journal of Mechanics in Medicine and Biology	1793-6810	2200
Journal of Medical Case Reports and Case Series	2692-9880	149-1249
Journal of Medical Case Reports and Reviews	2589-8647	260
Journal of Medical and Dental Science Research	2394-076X	35
Journal of Medical Care Research and Review	2589-8949	150
Journal of Medicine and Biological Studies	none	1200
Journal of Medicine and Public Health	2766-8355	1945-3600
Journal of Neurological Disorders and Stroke	2334-2307	720-3600
Journal of Neurology and Neuroscience	none	2200
Journal of Neurology and Translational Neuroscience	2333-7087	720-3600
Journal of Novel Physiotherpy and Rehabilitation	2573-6264	2259
Journal of Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine	2688-5115	500-3000
Journal of Osteology and Arthrology	none	1489
Journal of Palliative and Medical Care	none	1420
Journal of Palliative Medical Care & Research	none	1200
Journal of Pediatric Research and Neonatal Care	none	919
Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology Research	2578-1553	2000
Jounal of Physical Medicine and Rehbilitation	2690-0297	225-1050
Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Studies	2767-4584	2300
Journal of Physical Rehabilitation and Physiotherapy	none	1889
Journal of Psychiatry and Neurochemistry Research	none	999
Journal of Pulmonology and Respiratory Research	2639-9954	1849
Journal of Research in Pharmaceutical Science	2347-2995	35
Journal of Sports Medicine and Therapy	2573-1726	2589
Journal of Surgical Case Reports and Images	2690-1897	399-1999
Journal of Surgery and Perioperative Care	none	1800-3600
Journal of Trauma and Care	2573-1246	720-3600
Journal of Tumor Medicine & Prevention	2575-890X	1080-2480
Journal of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry	2348-9790	2500
Journal of Womens Health Care and Management	2692-0948	521-676
Journal of Women's Health and Development	2644-2884	500-3000
Journal of Women Health Care and Reproductive Medicine	none	1889
Journal of Women's Health and Gynecology	2379-6715	3480
Journal of Yoga and Physiotherapy	2476-1303	1080-2480
JSM Bioavailability and Bioequivalence	2641-7812	720-3600
JSM Health Education & Primary Health Care	2578-3777	720-3600
JSM Medical Case Reports	none	900-1800
JSM Microbiology	2333-6455	630-3600
JSM Pediatric Neurology	none	630-3600
JSM Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation	2578-3572	720-3600
JSM Thyroid Disorders and Management	none	630-2340
Med Discoveries	none	1000
Medical and Clinical Case Reports International	none	1800-3600
Medical & Clinical Case Reports Journal	2584-0355	1499
Medicalo Case Reports and Reviews	2517-7214	1990
Medical Devices and Diagnostic Engineering	2399-6854	2190
Medicine and Medical Sciences	2682-5759	600
Neurodegenerative Diseases: Current Research	2832-9422	1319
Neurology and Neuroscience	2692-7918	1800
New Advances in Brain & Critical Care	2771-7887	3019
Nursing and Health Care	2471-6529	799
Nurture	1994-1633	1000
OBM Integrative and Complementary Medicine	2573-4393	300
Online Journal of Complementary & Alternative Medicine	2644-2957	649-1780
Open Access Journal of Complementary & Alternative Medicine	2644-1217	549-1259
Open Access Journal of Toxicology	2474-7599	1080-2480
Open Journal of Public Health	2689-9388	1800-3600
Orthopedics and Sports Medicine Open Access Journal	2638-6003	549-1259
Palliative Medicine and Care International Journal	2688-3821	1080-2480
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Research	2398-3353	490
Reports on Global Health Research	2690-9480	960-3560
Research and Reports of Medicine	2637-367X	1069
Scandinavian Journal of Public Health	1651-1905	4000
SciBase Critical Care & Emergency Medicine	none	2000
SCIREA Journal of Clinical Medicin	2706-8870	480
SMP Sports Science and Medicine	none	1230
SOJ Complementary and Emergency Medicine	2833-3357	789-1049
Sports and Excervise Medicine	none	1950

STEM – Medial Education	none	2589
Surgery Research Journal	2768-0428	1500
Surabaya Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Journal	2656-0895	none
The American Journal of Medicine	1555-7162	0-3390
The Open Public Health Journal	1874-9445	690
Trauma and Emergency Care	2398-3345	500
Trends in Medicine	1594-2848	3450
World Journal of Clinical and Medical Case Reports	2996-4350	1800-3600
World Journal of Clinical & Medical Images	2833-9312	2019
World Journal of Surgery and Surgical Research	2637-4625	1985-3600
World Journal of Yoga, Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation	2694-1767	649-1780

not only increases the critical assessment of submitted manuscripts, but also reduces the willingness to waive (in whole or in part) the APC for a specific manuscript.

APCs tend not to pose a problem for established researchers, not only because they tend to have a significantly higher salary than junior researchers, but particularly since they commonly have a budget that they can use for the purpose, even without asking permission from a superior. Young scientists commonly lack such a budget, and they will be pleasantly surprised if a journal offers them complete or partial waiving of the APC, sometimes as an 'offer that cannot be refused'. Accepting such an offer is tempting because they commonly have a lack of funds for publication of their manuscripts, in contrast to their established colleagues. Consequently, young scientists may easily be seduced to submit their manuscript to the journal that has sent such an 'offer that cannot be refused' or to another journal that has a very low APC (or even no APC at all). This is rarely the best choice, however, as the scope of such a journal need not coincide with the subject of the manuscript, and as the readers of the journal consequently need not be interested in the topic dealt with in the researcher's manuscript.

Many, particularly young, scientists and practitioners that have no or little access to funds for paying an APC will recognize the above problem, but they should not feel unique: it has been recognized already long ago that a considerable part of the costs spent to medical research is practically lost because the results are not published or – more commonly – published in a journal that is not read by medical researchers or practitioners in the same discipline. Thus far, little has been done, however, to solve this problem, in spite of its relevance for society.

Discussion

Young medical authors face several problems; some of them they can easily recognize and possibly handle themselves [6], but the negative effects of publishing in not well-chosen journals commonly become clear only on the longer term. The advantages of choosing the 'offer that cannot be refused' are, in contrast, clear immediately: not too critical reviews and quick publication. If also the APC is waived or reduced, it thus becomes very seductive to submit a manuscript to such a journal. Analysis of the authors that appear to become seduced by such journals

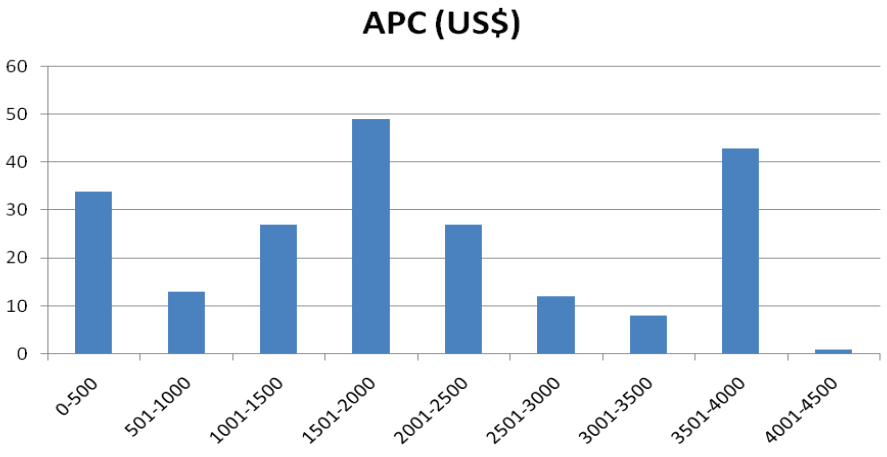

Figure 2 APCs asked by the journals that approached us to contribute a manuscript. Where the journals indicate a range (see Table 1), the highest APC is taken for this figure because this tends to represent the APC for a research paper.

indicates [7] that they are often young scientists who reside at universities or other institutes with low (or even absent) budgets for publishing.

There is, however, also a tendency that ever more medical scientists working at universities and hospitals with sufficient publication budgets choose such journals. Particularly the speed of publication seems a strong argument for choosing a specific journal, because of the publish-or-perish culture [5]. This development is unfortunate as it contaminates the medical literature with articles that cannot be traced easily by experts in the same discipline, if not included and searched for in established databases such as P**ubMed, MEDLINE and PubMed Central** of the (American) National Library of Medicine [8]. This may well lower the quality of medical treatments in the long term

Conclusions

The number of medical journals is still growing rapidly, and so is the number of young medical authors that contribute to journals without sufficiently realizing what journals are read by specialists in what medical disciplines. The choice for a journal seems commonly to be made on the basis of quick reviewing procedures and quick publication rather than on considerations about the readership and scientific impact. Since this is unwanted for both the authors' own scientific career and the entire society, measures should be taken to stop this development.

A good option would be to promote knowledge about the role and impact of scientific journals. This certainly should be a task for supervisors in university, but also for the experienced scientists that should agree (e.g., in their role as Head of a Department) with both the manuscript and the journal to which it is intended to be submitted. This is important because most articles published in not well-chosen journals will never be read by fellow-researchers, and even excellent articles in these journals will only rarely be referred to. This is a loss of money and effort that should – and can – be avoided by more information about publishing aspects during the university education of medical students.

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