



## Open-access scientific publishing: a shared academic responsibility

### Editorial

Scientific publishing is a core component of research since it enables knowledge to be scrutinised, validated, reproduced and used. Open-access publishing strengthens this by making research available to researchers, health professionals, students and the wider public without subscription barriers. In the Health Sciences, timely and equitable access to reliable evidence is especially important, as published findings may inform education, diagnostic practice, clinical decision-making and public-health policies.

However, the growing emphasis on publication in first-quartile (Q1) journals creates a tension between scientific prestige and genuinely universal access. Q1 status is frequently treated as a proxy for quality in recruitment, career progression, institutional assessment and funding competitions. Consequently, researchers may feel compelled to submit to highly ranked journals, including those that charge substantial article processing charges for immediate open access. Where such fees are unaffordable, authors may select subscription-based publication or restricted forms of access, meaning that the pursuit of bibliometric recognition can work against fully open dissemination.

This model also raises questions about the allocation of research funding. Public funding supports the research itself including the infrastructure and human resources that also allow peer-review work, while further funds are transferred to commercial publishers through subscriptions or publication charges. Although professional publishing involves legitimate costs, the concentration of scientific resources in expensive publication models may reduce the funding available for research resources.

Universities and polytechnic institutes, scientific societies and research-funding bodies should therefore devote part of their expertise, infrastructure and financial support to creating, maintaining and promoting robust, peer-reviewed journals that are free for both authors and readers. This model, often described as diamond open access, treats scholarly communication as shared academic infrastructure rather than primarily as a commercial service. Its success requires sustainable editorial teams, transparent governance, high-quality peer review, professional digital platforms, long-term preservation, ethical oversight and effective indexing and dissemination.

Supporting such journals does not mean lowering standards or disregarding international visibility. On the contrary, institutions and funders should help them achieve demanding standards of editorial quality, transparency and discoverability, while changing research assessment so that the value of an article is not determined mainly by the journal quartile. Greater recognition of methodological rigour, openness, reproducibility, educational value and societal impact would encourage responsible publishing choices.

Furthermore, the promotion of high-quality open-access journals should be recognised as an integral part of the mission of academia and scientific societies. These institutions are not only producers of research but also educators responsible for preparing future generations of scientists and health professionals. Freely accessible scientific literature enables students to read, analyse and discuss current research throughout their education, regardless of institutional resources. Thus, open-access journals contribute to teaching and learning by providing essential material for coursework, evidence-based practice, research training while also enabling students to progressively develop their own scientific writing and publication skills. By supporting sustainable, peer-reviewed journals that are free for both readers and authors, academic institutions help ensure that students are not merely consumers of knowledge but active participants in its creation and dissemination. In this sense, investment in open scientific publishing is simultaneously an investment in research, education and the future development of science itself.

Open access should therefore be understood not merely as the removal of a paywall, but as an ethical and strategic commitment to ensuring that public investment in science produces knowledge that is accessible, reusable and beneficial to society.

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