

## The role of small journals and their editors in academic communities or: a message to young researchers on why publishing in small journals is important

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When a medical professional becomes a journal editor, he or she is usually not aware of how special and specific their position will be. Being an expert in a certain field and having an academic reputation is usually considered a qualification for an editorial position. Editors are thus often surprised when they learn how complex, technologically advanced and regulated the scientific publishing enterprise in medicine is today (1, 2). For editors of small journals in small scholarly communities, following the developments in medical publishing is probably more important than for those in large, prestigious journals (3). This is because small journals from the so-called scientific periphery not only play a role in communicating new knowledge, but also provide education and service to the local community (4-7). In my life as an editor, I have learned the power of small journals to strengthen the local academic community and promote its visibility in the global academic environment.

Small journals thus provide a door for the local community to mainstream science and open a window to global science to see good local research with global relevance (8, 9). Journals and their editors do this by introducing and following scientific principles and quality criteria in publishing, which is the best way to educate researchers at local institutions (1, 2).

With a background of almost twenty years as editor of a small medical journal, I can give some advice to young academics who are readers of *Acta Medica Academica* or who are thinking of publishing their first research article – *Acta Medica Academica* is a good place to test your writing skills and publish reports of your research. Work-

ing with a journal that embraces the highest international standards in scientific publishing is an important learning experience and preparation for publishing in so-called 'mainstream' scientific journals with greater influence and impact.

Working with journal editors, you will learn about publishing guidelines such as the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) (10, 11). Editors are responsible for the integrity of the published research recorded in their journals and have the obligation to monitor and ensure that the publication process is fair, timely and thorough. They will provide you with their professional and research expertise, gained from the collective knowledge of larger international editorial organizations, such as the ICMJE, the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), the Council of Science Editors (CSE), as well as the European Association of Science Editors (EASE). They will also be able to provide guidance for all types of publication disputes or ethical problems, because the editorial community is very aware of the detrimental effect such problems may finally have on health care. COPE's ethical flow charts from the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) are particularly useful as algorithms for editors to follow when they have an ethical problem in their journal (12). They are available on the COPE web-site (<http://publicationethics.org/flowcharts>) and are perhaps even more useful for the authors and their institutions because they can learn about processes in research publishing and the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders in research, from authors and their institutions to journal editors (1, 2).

They will also learn about the importance of declaring possible conflicts of interest related to the published work or their general research work (13-15). Declaration

of conflicts of interest in special forms is routine practice in most international journals, and using a common declaration form both in small and large journals familiarizes researchers with the complexity of conflicts and related terminology. Having experienced misunderstandings about conflicts of interest, the ICMJE has recently developed a special glossary, which has been translated into several languages, so that local research communities and their members can use the forms adequately to provide a transparent account of their work (16).

Finally, you will learn the latest developments in the transparency of clinical research, which are at the heart of clinical research in all scientific and geographical communities. This means that when you send a report on a clinical trial, you have to have already registered the essential information about the trial in a public register. The ICMJE requirement for trial registration (17-19) has been accepted by the World Health Organization, which has developed a special portal for trial registries – the International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (<http://www.who.int/ictrp/en/>). The latest revision of the World Medical Association Helsinki Declaration on Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects from 2008 (<http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/index.html>), also introduced the requirement for trial registration: "Every clinical trial must be registered in a publicly accessible database before recruitment of the first subject." (20). With the most recent opening of the EudraCT database, European journals and their editors, including those in Bosnia and Herzegovina, can make a significant contribution to the process of increasing the transparency of clinical research for the benefit of the public.

When you publish good articles in a small journal it is not only an exceptional opportunity to learn about the medical pub-

lishing process that is so closely related to academic promotion and research recognition, but you will also contribute to the visibility of the journal itself, so that you will both have great benefits and promote local research (21).

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