

Research for all

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We have decided to launch a new medical journal. At the moment, we reject 93% of the research submitted to *CMAJ*, which causes us to do some soul searching. Much of this rejected research is of high quality and potentially relevant to our readers — it is just not as relevant as the 7% for which we have the space and resources to publish.

CMAJ strives to compile a mix of articles for each issue that will appeal to a broad spectrum of our readers. Each issue has some of the characteristics of a magazine: recognizable sections, a mixture of article types and an attractive cover to draw the reader's attention. Inevitably, this means we must exercise judgment over how much research to add to the mixture and what research we think readers will find the most interesting and useful. However, by being selective, we may risk contributing to publication bias — the tendency for published articles to be systematically different from the underlying body of completed research. By launching a new journal, we hope to reduce that bias.

At *CMAJ*, we believe in free access to research.

The new journal will be called *CMAJ Open* and will publish its first articles in January 2013. *CMAJ Open* will be an online open access journal that will publish high-quality, peer-reviewed research. Authors may submit directly to the new journal, where their papers will be carefully screened by editors and peer-reviewed to the same high standards used for *CMAJ*. The new journal will charge an article-processing fee, payable at the time the manuscript is accepted for publication. Authors who do not have access to funds to pay for publication may ask for an exemption at the time their manuscript is accepted; the ability to pay will not be part of the editorial decision as to a manuscript's suitability for the journal. Quality will be the sole criterion for publication, and researchers will not have to meet a hurdle of high relevance, impact or originality in their research.

The launch of *CMAJ Open* gives us the opportunity to offer better service to authors who submit their research to

CMAJ. Upon submission of a manuscript to *CMAJ*, we will offer the option of immediate consideration by *CMAJ Open*, should the paper not be suitable for publication in *CMAJ*. This will save authors time and avoid the repetition of peer review in another journal. We believe that *CMAJ Open* will be good news for researchers in Canada, because it provides them with another avenue for presenting their work to readers in Canada and around the world. Because both the costs and financial resources of *CMAJ Open* will be in direct proportion to the volume of papers accepted, there is reason to be optimistic that the journal will be able to fulfill its objective of publishing everything that meets its standard of quality.

Unfortunately, the revenues at *CMAJ* itself do not rise with the volume of manuscripts published. Our owner, the Canadian Medical Association, has instructed us to explore additional revenue sources to finance our operations, and we must explore all possibilities. In an effort to boost revenues, some journals have opted to restrict access to their research articles, asking for a subscription or pay-per-view — the “reader pays” model. This is not a step with which we at *CMAJ* feel comfortable. At *CMAJ*, we believe in free access to research. One way some other journals, among them highly regarded publications such as *PLoS Medicine* and *BMJ*, have achieved this is to adopt open access for research — the “author pays” model. In consultation with our publisher, the *CMAJ* editors have opted for this latter model. Beginning in January 2013, authors will be asked, when submitting their research, to agree to pay an article-processing fee should their article be accepted for publication in *CMAJ*. Again, authors may ask for an exemption.

We believe that launching *CMAJ Open* will provide researchers, particularly Canadian researchers, with greater opportunity to disseminate the results of their work to Canadian and international audiences. Will these changes reduce publication bias at *CMAJ* itself? Certainly not! We will continue to select the best, the most relevant and the most important articles to ensure that we continue to provide our readers with medical knowledge that matters.

Competing interests: See www.cmaj.ca/site/misc/cmaj_staff.xhtml

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