

TIPS ON LOW-COST PUBLISHING IN SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS

By: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Chew Boon How
Head of Clinical Research Unit, HPUPM



Publishing completed research in scientific journals is one of the disseminations to share findings with a wider audience for many purposes. Scientific progress builds on this kind of sharing and effort is informed, focused, and garnered throughout the world to solve a problem in the lives of humankind. This is almost compulsory and ethically congruent to publish completely all the results from research that were powered for all the objectives and through the pre-specified analyses as stated in registered or published study protocols. However, this most basic requirement faces challenges in affordable and timely publication as well as reaching the widest possible scientific community due to the relative hefty article processing charges (APC) and peer-review process. The cost of APC is increasingly prohibitive to many academics with the economic downturns in the world today. This is intensely felt by UPM and HPUPM with recent revised policy on the journal publication fund (the Dana Penerbitan Jurnal, DPJ)[1].

In this article, some sound tips are provided to continue publishing your research in medical journals. These take into account the third article by the DPJ, professional age of the academics for initial scientific experience and job confirmation, speed-to-publication in certain research areas and disciplines, and a belief that citation is equally good if not better for articles in the 'traditional' subscription medicine and health journals compared to those open-access (OA) journals [2], and the impact factors of the journals are not the metric to be accrued for most articles in them [3].

The tips in descending order are:

Consider free Scopus-indexed journals if journal ranking is less of a concern to the young academics and authors.

No APC journals if speed-to-publication, length of the manuscript and the research from where the reports are derived are judged to be of high-quality. These quality indicators include a systematic review, randomised controlled trial, big dataset, important or expensive outcomes, long follow-up (> 12 months), relevant topics and sound designs are strongly justified and fully described, respectively.

When speed-to-publication is important because of the research topics and outputs that may concern for being the first in the world, journals that have a track record in rapid and reliable editorial processing disregard of APC could be considered. However, many traditional' subscription clinical and biomedical journals have proven to be as efficient as the OA journals during the COVID-19 pandemic [3].

OA journals with APC if availability of research grants, or their publishers are being subscribed to by own institution where a waiver or discounted APC is given for an agreed period.

OA journals could be the option when qualified for the DPJ and pressing for time to meet the institution's annual key performance index in publication. OA journals are generally known to have higher acceptance rates, but beware they are not much faster in editorial processing, and many are operating as or like the predatory journals [5].

Most importantly, the two forever success factors in getting research to publication are well-written reports from well-conducted research. The former meets the comprehensive reporting as required by the many already available checklists [6]. The latter comprises careful and sound research planning right from research topics of gap-filling or ground-breaking, choosing the right expert-collaborators, public and patients (end-users) involvement in the planning, using the right theoretical design, data collection methods and statistical analyses. Foundational knowledge for an experiential skills in high-quality research and successful publication are possible [7,8].



References

1. DPJ document and recorded session for UPM staff: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QTRtMH5ol5Jiabxywi5a9GwovY41wGg?usp=sharing>
2. Björk BC, Solomon D. Open access versus subscription journals: a comparison of scientific impact. *BMC Med.* 2012 Jul 17;10:73. doi: 10.1186/1741-7015-10-73.
3. Triggler CR, MacDonald R, Triggler DJ, et al. Requiem for impact factors and high publication charges. *Account Res.* 2022 Apr;29(3):133-164. doi: 10.1080/08989621.2021.1909481.
4. Jung RG, Di Santo P, Clifford C, et al. Methodological quality of COVID-19 clinical research. *Nat Commun.* 2021 Feb 11;12(1):943. doi: 10.1038/s41467-021-21220-5.
5. Salwana Ahmad. [What is a predatory journal?](#) RECRUS Res. Newsl. 2022, 2(14): 245.
6. The Enhancing the QUALity and Transparency Of health Research (EQUATOR) Network. <https://www.equator-network.org>
7. [Good Science in Clinical Trials. Keypoints from the forum discussion with Dato' Dr. Nik Hisamuddin Nik Ab Rahman, Prof. Dato' Dr. Adeeba Binti Kamarulzaman and Datuk Prof. Dr. Looi Lai Meng](#)
8. Research Development Workshop, [25-26 August 2022](#). RECRUS Res. Newsl. 2022, 2(16): xxx-yyy.