Steps towards quality of open access publishing

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In times of information deluge, editing and publishing a scholarly journal is increasingly dependent on digital tools and artificial intelligence.1 To a large extent, this is a positive trend which drives mass proliferation of scholarly articles and online journals across academic disciplines. Rheumatology as a research-intensive discipline may particularly benefit from the emerging digital evaluation tools, systematic search engines, distribution platforms, and repositories. Currently, processing journal submissions through advanced online systems allows detecting major inconsistencies and mistakes in research reporting and formatting manuscripts. Such systems, linked to regularly updated reviewer instructions of global editorial associations and supported by external bibliographic searches, enable fast evaluation of the novelty, originality, methodological rigour, and implications of the manuscripts by peer reviewers.

The author and reviewer identifiers, and particularly the Open Researcher and Contributor IDs (ORCID; https://orcid.org/), are now employed by most publishers to validate individual profiles at the peer review and increase visibility of their contributions post-publication. The Mediterranean Journal of Rheumatology has also encouraged its contributors to register with and submit informative ORCID IDs with biographical notes, publication lists, and other academic accomplishments. The ORCID IDs are now integrated with the the Publons platform (https://publons.com), yet another indispensable digital tool for crediting reviewers and selecting active and skilled experts for further evaluations.2,3 Notably, the number of academic contributors with ORCID IDs is fast approaching the level of 6 million, and more publishers and standalone journals are partnering with Publons to streamline the peer review activities and global recognition of their reviewers. With the integration of Publons with Web of Science (WoS, Clarivate Analytics) in 2017 and further upgrades of the platform, the registered scholars are now offered automatic updates of their profiles by listing their WoS-indexed articles and tracking related citations. Publons profiles are particularly valued by emerging scholarly journals, aiming to attract scarcely available reviewers and increase the quality of peer review.4,5 The total number of registered reviewers on Publons is 541,093, including 571 in rheumatology (as of December 19, 2018). The Mediterranean Journal of Rheumatology acquired its profile on Publons this year to increase transparency of the peer review activities and give deserved academic credits to its best contributors (https://publons.com/journal/101214/mediterranean-journal-of-rheumatology).

The speed of processing and visibility of scholarly contributions are also increasingly dependent on Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) issued by Crossref, a powerful sys-
Editors should familiarize themselves with the Journal Ar-
criteria of most bibliographic services, medical journal
the requirements of Open Access and satisfy indexing
Open Access is free access to published works for read-
of Medicine of the US for encoding PubMed Central-ar-
es has shifted towards permanent article identifiers.
items and systematic searches through online databas-
eans mean Journal of Rheumatology
morphic fields of science.8 The absolute majority of open-ac-
medical journals have benefited from archiving by
Medicinal Journal of Rheumatology
The basic principles of Open Access are outlined in two
seminal documents, which are consulted by the editors
of the Mediterranean Journal of Rheumatology, and
related links are embedded in the journal instructions: the
Budapest Open Access Initiative (2002) and the Berlin
Declaration on Open Access (2003).9,10 In line with the
statements of these documents, the Open Access ini-
itiative is primarily aimed to increase the use of published
items for research and education.11 Additionally, the im-
proved visibility, one of the main achievements of the ini-
tiative, has enabled detecting and ‘cleaning’ erroneous
and fraudulent literature.12 Although the main attribute of
Open Access is free access to published works for read-
ers, there are other, not less important, components re-
related to digitization, preservation, and archiving. To meet
the requirements of Open Access and satisfy indexing
criteria of most bibliographic services, medical journal
editors should familiarize themselves with the Journal Ar-
ticle Tag Suite (JATS) format of Extensible Markup Lan-
guage (XML), which is employed by the National Library
of Medicine of the US for encoding PubMed Central-ar-
chived items.13 The XML format enables machine-read-
ability and makes it possible to index quality journals by
most prestigious bibliographic databases and digital re-
postories.
While Open Access is gaining momentum and numerous
journals opt for different models of open-access publish-
ing (i.e., gold, platinum, hybrid, green), several global
initiatives have been launched to distinguish periodicals
with reliable peer-reviewed contents from spurious online
platforms of wasteful publishing. The Directory of Open
Access Journals (DOAJ) is one such initiative with strict
scientific and technical criteria, listing 12,397 open ac-
cess journals from 129 countries and offering records
of 3,600,965 for systematic searches (as of December
19, 2018). The number of the listed medical journals is
699, with 472,913 linked items available for searches.
The latest incorporation of the Mediterranean Journal of
Rheumatology to the area of medicine of the registry
is an exemplary achievement for the whole field of rheuma-
tology (December 10, 2018).
Launched in 2003, the DOAJ project has passed a long
way and become a ‘whitelist’ of reliable periodicals. The
DOAJ collaborated with several global editorial associ-
ations to set principles of transparency in publishing.14
The declared by the Mediterranean Journal of Rheuma-
tology adherence to these principles is essential for its
development and ethical promotion.
Acquiring the seal of DOAJ is a milestone in the journal
digitization and recognition by the scientific commu-
ity.15,16 For medical journals, the DOAJ listing is proposed
as one of the requirements for indexing by PubMed
and archiving by PubMed Central.17 In 2015, the Scopus
database introduced the open access indicator for separate
marking DOAJ-listed journals, making it easier
to navigate and search through the growing number of
open-access periodicals which passed stringent qual-
ity checks.18 Notably, the SCImago Journal & Country
Rank platform currently ranks 34,171 Scopus-indexed
periodicals across all subject categories, including 4,504
for open access. In the field of rheumatology there are
60 Scopus-indexed periodicals, with 20 registered with
DOAJ (https://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?-
category=2745). These numbers will definitely continue
to grow in the future.
While the recent digital innovations enormously influ-
ence the speed of publishing, editorial credentials still
remain precious assets for the quality of publishing and
impacting science. The journal editors with connections
to global and regional editorial associations are capable
of establishing networks of skilled peers, share expe-
rience, and add to the scientific prestige of respective
periodicals. In the field of medicine, the International
Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE, http://
icme.org) is perhaps the most important association; of-
fering frequently updated editorial guidance for authors,
reviewers, and editors. Editors claiming adherence to the ICMJE recommendations and enforcing its points in their daily practice offer good service to their community of authors and readers. Exemplary, the editors of the Mediterranean Journal of Rheumatology registered their interest in the recommendations at the ICMJE website in 2017.19

Several other global associations also allow advancing scientific and publishing editors’ skills.20 The editorial credentials and reviewer responsibilities are currently highlighted in the documents published by the Committee on Publication Ethics, the largest association of editors with more than 12,000 members. Member-editors of the COPE are now offered a set of updated recommendations about authorship problems, conflict of interest disclosures, ethics approval, copyright issues, journal management, and retractions.21 The latest incorporation of the updated publication ethics points into the instructions of the Mediterranean Journal of Rheumatology is an exemplary move towards better quality control for disseminating reliable information for the respective regional community.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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