

Swiss Medical Weekly: Quo vadis?

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Tradition and Diamond Open Access

Despite the "Swiss" in its title, the Swiss Medical Weekly has been established not only at national but also at international level for over 150 years. The journal is part of our scientific history, with original publications that have shaped the development of research in Switzerland (until the year 2000 still under its former title "Schweizerische Medizinische Wochenschrift"). Examples are the fundoplication described by R. Nissen in 1956 [1], the first drug treatments for depression reported in 1957 by R. Kuhn [2], the first description of a haemolytic-uraemic syndrome by C. Gasser in 1955 [3] and, a few years later, the enzymatic method for measuring blood glucose levels in our patients by R. Richterich [4]. These historical publications were followed by many more recent articles with significant international impact.

Thousands of articles have been published in the SMW. The journal had built its own freely accessible website, although initially only with the abstracts of the articles, as early as in 1996. It has followed the Open Access model since the first OA declarations and initiatives. Full-text PDFs have been published since January 2000 (reminder: The Budapest Open Access Initiative was released in 2002 and the Berlin Declaration in 2003). SMW was one of the first journals to adhere to the principles of Diamond Open Access (also known as Platinum OA or Public Service Open Access). This model, still too little known, guarantees editorial independence and scientific transparency. The SMW adheres to strict quality principles, respecting the cultural diversity of all disciplines.

"Diamond Open Access" is a concept that emerged from the academic environment. In March 2021, the "Open Access Diamond Journals Study" [5] showed for the first time the quantitative importance of this field and its influence on the quality of publications. Approximately 29,000 Diamond journals publish 8–9% of all scientific articles and 45% of the OA articles [6]. With Diamond Open Access, access to every article is open to the entire global scientific community, and authors are not required to make financial contributions for their submissions. This avoids any financial influence on editorial decisions. In contrast, the model with "article processing charges" theoretically runs the risk of increasing a journal's revenues through a scientifically undesirable increase in accepted articles [7].

The Diamond Open Access model requires the commitment of many partners who support the journal. Numerous

institutions support the SMW financially and thus make it possible for it to adhere to this publication model. This financial support is also an expression of the desire of all these partners to promote young academics in Switzerland: all authors should have the opportunity to submit an article without financial obstacles.

The SMW supporting association

The SMW supporting association ("Trägerverein Swiss Medical Weekly SMW") is a non-profit organisation in charge of the Swiss Medical Weekly. The supervisory board of the supporting association bears the ultimate responsibility for the journal and its journalistic course. It ensures the editorial independence and quality of the journal, and covers the editorial, publishing and development costs. After the change from Schweizerische Medizinische Wochenschrift to Swiss Medical Weekly in 2001, the journal has been published as a journal of EMH Swiss Medical Publishers Ltd. Having assumed responsibility for the content and finances of the journal, the SMW supporting association now also acts as the journal's publisher.

The following institutions have joined the SMW supporting association (listed in chronological order): Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS), Swiss Medical Association (FMH), University Hospital Basel, GZO Spital Wetzikon, Faculty of Biomedical Sciences, Università della Svizzera Italiana, Solothurner Spitäler AG, HFR – Hôpital Fribourgeois, University Department of Geriatric Medicine Felix Platter, Kantonsspital Baselland, Spital Zollikerberg, "Penta Plus" (Kantonsspital Baden, Spitalzentrum Biel, Kantonsspital Graubünden, Spital Simental-Thun-Saanenland, Kantonsspital Winterthur), Swiss Society of Intensive Care Medicine, Swiss Society of Cardiology, Bibliothèque Universitaire de Médecine, Centre hospitalier universitaire vaudois (CHUV), Swiss Society of Emergency and Rescue Medicine, Zuger Kantonsspital, Kantonsspital Aarau, Kantonsspital Münsterlingen and Kantonsspital Frauenfeld (Spital Thurgau), Swiss Paraplegic Centre and Swiss Paraplegic Research, Spitalregion Luzern-Nidwalden (LUNIS) and Kantonsspital Obwalden, Stadtspital Waid und Triemli, Zürich, and Stiftung für wissenschaftliche Forschung am Stadtspital Triemli, Swiss Society of Infectiology, Federal Office of Public Health, Hôpital du Jura, Swiss Society of General Internal Medicine, Hôpital du Valais and Swiss Society of Rheumatology.

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We would like to express our sincere thanks to all the members of the SMW supporting association and to the Board of the association.

The SMW's commitment

The journal publishes articles from all areas of medicine. The editor-in-chief for basic research is Prof. A. Aguzzi; in clinical medicine Prof. M. Battegay, who will in future devote himself to new tasks in the SMW supporting association, has recently been replaced by Prof. G. Waeber.

The scientific quality of the articles published in the SMW is the primary commitment of the editorial board, which never wants to take the easiest route to achieve this. Scientific rigour is based on the quality of the articles submitted and the quality of the peer-review process, ensured by around 30 "Academic Editors". These colleagues have broad scientific competences and accompany the review process of the submitted articles with commitment and professionalism. All research articles are assessed and commented on by a methodological expert at the journal's expense. External expert reviewers are not invited on the basis of keywords from a database but are selected by the Academic Editors and invited individually by the Editorial Office. We are indebted to our Academic Editors for their remarkable commitment. Scientists outstanding at national and international levels are also invited to write comprehensive and relevant review articles for the SMW.

For information, we present some figures on the editorial work of the SMW. About 600–800 articles are submitted annually. The acceptance rate is about 29%; about 200 peer-reviewed articles are published every year. In 2021, 45% of the 1600 experts contacted kindly agreed to send their referee comments to the journal. The average time for the preparation of a review is about 8 days. Each article requires at least two expert reviewers' opinions in addition to the methodological review. The time taken for authors to receive reviewers' comments averages 20 days.

These strict principles have helped the journal gain its good reputation. For example, the Impact Factor 2021 is 4.2, a recognition by the international community that assigns the SMW a role as a scientific reference journal not only in Switzerland but also at the international level. More than 130,000 readers visit the SMW website every month.

The SMW has been appointed as official scientific publication by several professional societies: the Swiss Society of General Internal Medicine, the Swiss Society of Infec-

tiology, the Swiss Society of Rheumatology and the Swiss Society of Pulmonary Hypertension.

The journal's ambitions

Our goals are to maintain the editorial standard and to further increase the impact factor. This is a difficult task, but not impossible given the quality of articles submitted in recent years. The editorial board wants to maintain streamlined workflows that guarantee short deadlines for reviewing submitted articles. We are also committed to ensuring that the quality of the reviews is excellent and relevant. Even if an article is rejected, the reviewer comments should be useful for the authors.

By providing free access to published articles at no cost to the authors and without a negative ecological footprint due to paper printing, the SMW aims to contribute to the societal challenges that aim at sustainable development. Fair access to the best scientific publications, subject to a strict editorial policy, should be possible for all.

The editorial board wants to support the submission of high-quality articles and thus contribute to the promotion of young scientists in Switzerland and abroad. We intend the SMW to meet the quality requirements of the various specialist societies in our country and to be an indispensable scientific partner of all specialist societies in Switzerland, the Swiss Medical Association FMH and the Swiss National Science Foundation.

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