

The Researchers' Journal of Internal Medicine: A New Way to Publish Research

Brian P. Elliott; Kathryn Burtson; Michael McMahon; Abhimanyu Chandel

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EDITORIAL

The scientific publishing process is the foundation of medical advancements. Through peer review, editorial oversight, and the dissemination of findings, medical advances have shared remedies for anything from high blood pressure to minute genetic mutations. But the remedy desperately needed now is the remedy for scientific publishing itself. It's breaking. The sheer quantity of scientific research is exploding, straining the peer review process and the ability for thorough scientific evaluations [1]. Meanwhile, private publishers are taking advantage of these trends by increasing article processing charges and reaping excessive profits [2,3]. In a technological era where access to research could be expedited and delivered at cost, we paradoxically experience delayed scientific reviews and excessive charges. These practices not only create barriers for the scientific community but also threaten the integrity and accessibility of the research itself.

This publishing paradox exists because scientific publishing is a tale of two markets. Researchers operate in the career market. They care about promoting academically and know that the quantity of papers they publish directly improves their chances. They care about prestige, performing peer reviews for free and submitting to journals with notoriety and high impact factors, despite the latter being a flawed metric

[4,5]. Publishers, by and large, operate in the monetary market. They are in the business of prioritizing profits, and business has never been better. The five major scientific publishers have become multi-billion-dollar companies because they understand that scientific researchers are academically pressured to publish frequently and place prestige above cost when deciding where to publish [4].

In this article, we highlight the dire issues facing scientific publishing, and how the Researchers' Journal of Internal Medicine creates a new publishing paradigm that can improve these issues.

Article Processing Charges: A Pay-to-Publish Culture

How much is your career worth? That's what many scientific journals ask researchers by charging article processing charges. The dependency of career advancement on publishing research is clear. In medicine, publishing research is associated with better opportunities across the full spectrum of training, ranging from medical school acceptance to promotion and tenure committees [6-9]. In many cases, publishing research is essential to advance academically. This necessity has created a vast market for pay-to-publish journals that seek to profit from this paradigm. As a result, article processing charges are often several thousand dollars, despite the true publishing costs being

5-10 times smaller than these costs [10,11]. A recent preprint suggests that these article processing charges are accumulating revenues in the hundreds of millions of dollars for the top six scientific publishers, whose profit margins are huge compared to other industry standards [12]. This is, put simply, egregious academic exploitation of colossal proportions.

We aim to improve this issue by founding a nonprofit organization that leverages current technologies to decrease publishing expenses and offer scientific publishing services near cost. The Researchers' Journal of Internal Medicine, a subsidiary of Public Science Journals, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization, is on a mission to create a rational and non-exploitative method of scientific publishing. Our nonprofit categorization allows us to focus on mission over revenue, opening doors for donations, grant funding, and other methods to procure funding. We also leverage current technologies such as artificial intelligence platforms and a semi-automated publishing process. With these methods, we can dramatically reduce expenses for typesetting, copyediting, formatting, and more. We then use these savings to give back by donating to charitable organizations or offering honoraria to authors and peer reviewers.

Paywalled Research: Holding Knowledge Hostage

Paywalled research is perhaps one of the most obvious examples of unfairness in scientific publishing. While millions of dollars are spent each year on public funding for research, the results are often locked behind paywalls, accessible only to those with institutional subscriptions or individual access to journals. This restricts the dissemination of research, creating a system where knowledge is not freely accessible to all. Academic institutions, libraries, and even governments are spending increasingly large sums to subscribe to scientific journals. Global expenditure on journal subscriptions has been rising for decades, far outpacing inflation [13]. This leaves many institutions, especially

those in low-income countries, unable to afford the necessary access to scientific literature. As a result, researchers in these countries may be excluded from global conversations, not due to a lack of capability, but because they cannot afford the journals that contain the latest research.

Everything published through the Researchers' Journal of Internal Medicine will be truly open: free to submit, free to publish, and free to read. Rather than a subscription model, it operates under a "Freemium" model. This means we offer premium paid services like expedited processing and extra editorial services, but we never require researchers or readers to pay.

Profiteering From Donated Peer Review

Researchers and peer reviewers often give their work away for free. When authors do not pay to publish their research, they submit it for free. Then, the scientific publisher utilizes their network of peer reviewers who provide unpaid labor to vet these research submissions. It's estimated that U.S.-based scientists "donate" over \$1.5 billion yearly in labor by peer-reviewing [14]. If these "donations" went purely to advancing science, this arrangement might be viewed as acceptable and necessary. Instead, publishing giants exploit free labor to advance their profit margins, which has resulted in profit margins on par with some of the most profitable companies on Forbes' Global 2000 list [15].

We created the Researchers' Journal of Internal Medicine with the ideology that the research we publish belongs to the researchers. That means authors retain the full copyright of their work. But to take it a step further, we offer honoraria to authors and peer reviewers who contribute to our mission with high-impact articles. As global research production continues to explode in quantity, this incentive is essential to maintain expeditious and quality peer review.

Help Us Change Scientific Publishing

These issues in scientific publishing and the

resultant calls for change are not new [16]. Yet, true change has not happened for two major reasons. The first is that publishing capabilities were not previously available at low cost. Journals truly needed a publisher to facilitate in-print publications and run a large staff for formatting and proofreading. However, self-governed publishing is now possible in today's world of ubiquitous online-only publications and freely available artificial intelligence, archiving services, and formatting programs. The second reason for the persistence of the current, fatally flawed publishing system is us. Scientific publishing will continue to persist as an unjust system with perverse incentives as long as scientific researchers let it. If we continue to value impact factors over equitable and rational publishing, we will keep funding an oligopoly of profiteering publishers. But we don't have to. At the Researchers' Journal for Internal Medicine, we have created a mission-driven organization and platform where science supersedes profit. The ultimate value of this method is up to the scientific community, who can either choose to perpetuate the inaccessible and unscrupulous system in use or come together and create a new community of sustainable, accessible, and equitable scientific publishing. Every new editor, submission, peer reviewer, and publication is a vote for this new community. So, join us.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Corresponding Author: Brian Elliott
brianelliottmd@gmail.com

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Author Affiliations

Brian Elliott, MD: Assistant Professor at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; Department of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

Kathryn Burtson, MD: Associate Professor at Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine;

Department of Internal Medicine at Wright Patterson Air Force Base

Michael McMahon, MD: Assistant Professor at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; Department of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

Abhimanyu Chandel, MD: Assistant Professor at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; Department of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

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