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Letter to the Editor

New editorial policies for the International Journal of Infectious Diseases: Good or bad news for developing countries

We must begin by acknowledging the excellent editorial work carried out by the International Journal of Infectious Diseases (IJID), which is one of the most important journals in the field. We would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the new policies of the scientific journal publishers, and wish to impart our vision and perspective as authors from developing countries.

In 2013, IJID became an Open Access journal, which is great news in terms of access to information in low- and middle-income developing countries. Infectious diseases have a major impact in these countries. On the other hand, from the same date, IJID started to charge publishing costs to authors (article processing charges, or APCs). This measure is understandable in the move to an Open Access policy, but could negatively affect submissions from low- and middle-income countries, given clear limitations in funding for such activity.

Currently the charges apply to all types of article, even Letters to the Editor such as this one, and the cost is in the range of 600 to 1750 US dollars, without any distinction regarding the authors’ geographical origin. It is recognized that these costs are more difficult to bear for countries of low and middle income. Other journals, such as those of the Public Library of Science (PLoS) and Biomed Central (BMC), offer waivers for middle-income countries, ranging from free to low prices. We believe that such a measure should also be considered by IJID. In addition, we consider that charges for Letters to the Editor, which have a role in the critique of articles, should be waived, as is the case for other journals such as Clinical Infectious Diseases.

The participation of countries with limited resources has been visible in IJID. We reviewed the top 10 geographical origins of authors who published in IJID during 2013 (Table 1). A total of 272 articles were published, of which 140 (51.5%) were from high-income countries; the remaining articles were submitted by authors from countries of low- and middle-income (Table 1). Among the countries that published most in IJID, four are middle- or low-income: China, India, Turkey, and Brazil. The situation we describe has been discussed previously, as has been the case of research publication in India. Therefore we believe that this should be taken into account and that a discussion should begin for journals, like IJID, moving to Open Access.

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Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>32 (11.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>30 (11.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>16 (5.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>14 (5.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>13 (4.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>13 (4.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>13 (4.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>8 (2.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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References


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