EDITORIAL

Is *Public Health Action* achieving its goals?

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Public Health Action (PHA) has now published 11 issues since its launch in September 2011, and this provides us with the opportunity to reflect on how it is operating. Specifically, PHA aims to publish operational research on health systems and services that serve the poor, and to do so in a timely manner. We have taken the opportunity to review the first set of original articles published by the *Journal* in its first 10 issues. We specifically looked at the pattern and progress of submission and the process of evaluation of the published articles submitted during the years 2011, 2012 and 2013.

The pattern of submission has not been uniform over the calendar months evaluated: the number of submissions has increased steadily over each calendar period, with the lowest number of submissions in the earlier months and the greatest later in the calendar period, with a steady rise over each period. The number of monthly submissions was low at the outset but has increased over the three years by more than two-fold for each of the years.

The articles published have come from specific sources: approximately half of the articles have come from authors involved in training or education programmes, an additional fifth have come from technical collaboration with public health programmes, another seventh were from research undertaken with academic institutions and the remainder from the work of non-governmental organisations not specifically involved in training or education.

Over this initial period, articles have been published

from 47 countries: 41% of the articles have come from the World Health Organization's Africa Region, 32% from the South-East Asia Region, 17% from the Western Pacific Region, 5% from the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 3% from the Americas Region and 2% from the Europe Region.

At its inception, PHA established ambitious targets for timely turnaround for review of articles. For the period evaluated, slightly more than three-quarters of articles were assigned to Associate Editors within four days of submission, and the same proportion completed the first round of peer review within 31 days.

While the subject matter of the journal has specifically targeted operational research, the types of services evaluated have varied substantially, from communicable diseases to women's health, child health, non-communicable diseases and neglected tropical diseases.

Although PHA is still in its early stages, it appears to be proceeding according to the targets established at the outset. It focuses on health services, primarily in countries with large populations with a high proportion of poor inhabitants, it addresses a broad range of topics in public health services and it has managed to handle submissions in a timely fashion. On this basis, it should be able to expand to fill the broad need for critical evaluation of the operation of health systems and services. We hope it will be increasingly seen as the home of operational research, as well as a vehicle for analysing what we do in providing health solutions for the poor.

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