DOI: 10.5455/msm.2017.29.4-7

Received: 23 February 2017; Accepted: 10 March 2017

© 2017 Doncho M. Donev, Izet Masic

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

EDITORIAL

Mater Sociomed. 2017 Mar; 29(1): 4-7

Ten Steps to Improve Quality of the Journal *Materia Socio-Medica*

Doncho M. Donev¹, Izet Masic²

ABSTRACT

Introduction and aim: *Materia Socio-Medica* is one of the oldest public health journals in Europe, established in 1978, and among the most important journals for public health in South-Eastern Europe. The Journal covers all important public health professional, academic and research areas in this field. The aim of the paper is to analyze the journal articles and statistical facts in 2016 and to point out the directions for action and planned further activities for improving the quality of the published papers and visibility of the journal. **Methods:** Review and analysis of documentation and production of the journal, evidence of submitted and rejected manuscripts and published papers in 2016. **Results:** Total number of 111 articles was published in *Materia Socio-Medica* during 2016. The most of them were original articles (64,5%). Articles from the fields of Health promotion and prevention were predominant (82,7%), which is one of the primary scope of the journal. Authors of the published articles in 2016 are dispersed to three continents (Europe, Asia and North America) and 15 different countries. The largest number of articles was submitted by authors from the country of origin of the journal, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The acceptance rate of *Materia Socio-Medica* in 2016 was 35.7%. Total number of 116 reviewers participated in the manuscript review process in 2016. **Conclusion:** *Materia Socio-Medica* will continue to improve the quality of the published papers in 2017 and beyond through education of potential authors, reviewers and Editorial Board members, quality selection of reviewers, supportive editing of articles, and clearly defining instructions and ethical standards of the journal. **Keywords:** *Materia Socio-Medica*, PMC, activities in 2016, open access, publishing ethics and integrity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The journal "*Materia Socio Medica*" was established by the Society of Social Medicine of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2000. Previously it was official journal of the Yugoslav Association of Societies of Social Medicine with title *Materia Socio-Medica Yugoslavica*, established in 1978. Printing of the journal stopped in 1991, when the wartime in former Yugoslavia began. The first Editor-in-Chief was Dr. Arif Smajkic, professor of Social medicine at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Editorial Board was consisted with very famous and important scientists and academics from all universities in former Yugoslavia. During his managing of the Editorial Board approximately 800 papers were published in *Materia Socio-Medica*.

From 2000 the name of the journal has been changed to *Materia Socio-Medica* and Editor-in-Chief became Prof. Izet Masic, MD, PhD, serving till 2016. From the year 2009 *Materia Socio-Medica* has been accepted as an official journal of the Academy of Medical Sciences of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1).

2. AIM

The aim of this editorial is to analyze journal articles and statistical facts in 2016 and to point out the directions for action and planned further activities for improving the quality of the published papers and visibility of the journal.

3. METHODS

Review and analysis of documentation for production of the journal and evidence of submitted and rejected manuscripts and published papers in 2016, as well as the structure of the published articles sorted by numerous variables, and other specifics in the development of the journal.

¹Institute of Social Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University "Ss Cyril and Methodius" Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

² Faculty of Medicine, University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Corresponding author:

Prof. Dr. Doncho Donev, Institute of Social Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University "Ss Cyril and Methodius", 50 Divizia 6, MKD Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. ORCID ID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5237-443X> Phone: +389 2 3298580 Mob: +389 70 244760 E-mail: dmdonev@gmail.com

4. PAST DEVELOPMENTS AND CURRENT CONDITION

Materia Socio-Medica is peer review journal with open access in the primary field of social medicine and public health. There is free access to each number of the journal, and an individual link to the abstract and complete version of each article issued in each number in both html and PDF format. In addition to appearing digitally, the journal was also published as a hard copy.

Beside PubMed and PubMed Central, *Materia Socio-Medica* is indexed in EBSCO, DOAJ, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research - GFMER, HINARI, ProQuest, NewJour, ISC Master Journals List, CrossRef, Google Scholar, Genamics JournalSeek, WorldCat, NLM Catalog, VINITI of RAS, Catalyst, SafetyLit, EastView and ScopeMed (2-4).

In the period from 2014 to 2016, *Materia Socio-Medica* has been published bimonthly or six issues per year and from 2017 returned again to the previous practice for publishing four issues per year, now just in electronic publishing.

Plagiarism check of manuscripts was introduced in 2009.

Figure 1. Number of articles per issue published in 2016 (total 111)

Figure 2. Distribution of articles according to type

Figure 3. Acceptance rate - 35,7%

In the past four years higher controls have been introduced regarding the originality of the manuscripts and the detection of plagiarism.

The current Editor-in-Chief is Prof. Dr. Doncho Donev and Editorial Board has 26 members from 18 countries, with 85% of members from outside B&H.

Figure 4. The new website of the *Materia Socio-Medica* journal (www.matersociomed.org)

5. MATERIA SOCIO-MEDICA JOURNAL PRODUCTION DURING THE YEAR 2016

Total number of 111 articles was published in six issues of *Materia Socio-Medica* during 2016 and the average number of articles per issue was 17 (Figure 1). Authors of the articles published in the journal *Materia Socio-Medica* during 2016 came from three continents (Europe, Asia and North America) and from 15 different countries. The largest number of articles came from the country of origin of the journal, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The most common type of published articles in all six issues during 2016 was "original article" (64,5%), (Figure 2). Articles from the fields of Health promotion and prevention were predominant (82,7%), which is one of the primary scope of the journal.

In the review process of manuscripts submitted to *Materia Socio Medica* during the 2016 participated 116 reviewers. Reviewer's pool is constantly increasing and the number of countries they come from in 2016 was 17. In the process of reviewing we apply the double blind method.

In the Figure 3 has been represented the number of submitted, rejected and accepted articles. The acceptance rate in 2016 was 35,7%. Some of the main flaws as reasons for rejection of manuscripts are poorly presented abstract and inappropriate title, flawed study design, inappropriate research question and hypothesis, poor statistics, being too verbiage about study results, disorganized writing style with too much grammatical and syntax errors and poor presentation of tables and figures.

Journal "*Materia Socio Medica*" has got a new web-site from January 1st, 2017 (Figure 4). The web-site, as a good source of information for authors, reviewers, Editorial board members and broader scientific community, provides essential and transparent information about the journal features and management portal for submitting articles, instructions for authors and review process, as well as the editing practices.

6. PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND DIRECTIONS FOR ACTION FOR THE JOURNAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Each journal represents a final product of joint efforts of the editors and Editorial Board members, reviewers and authors themselves.

Materia Socio-Medica will continue in 2017 with further development and improving the quality of the journal. The goal of the Editorial Board members is journal indexation in the Scopus and Web of Science, with the continuous increasing the quality of the journal articles and visibility of the journal. The following main steps are going to be undertaken for the journal quality and visibility improvement in accordance with the principles set out and recommendations from the international scientific editing and publishing associations (ICMJE, COPE, WAME etc.), (5-7), the SWEP 2016 Seminar conclusions (8) and Sarajevo Declaration on Integrity and Visibility of Scholarly Publications (<http://www.cmj.hr/2016/57/6/28051276.htm>), (9), as well as selected relevant literature and personal views and experience of the authors (10-18):

1. To maintain and improve quality, ethical soundness and editorial strategy in order to ensure higher impact and citation rates of the articles published in *Materia Socio Medica*. The editors and Editorial board members, as well as reviewers and potential authors should tend to increase awareness and responsibility for promoting integrity and to make efforts to publicize innovative and evidence-based sources and information. In addition, greater control would be given to the editors and reviewers, as well as screening all manuscripts with Cross check, a program for plagiarism detection. Any notification about scientific and publishing misconduct and erroneous publications in *Materia Socio Medica* would be taken into consideration by editors for possible corrections or retractions;

2. Further internationalization and broadening the indexation and archiving of *Materia Socio Medica* in additional relevant global databases in order to promote the papers post-publication. Information about the journal and its indexation would be clearly visible, if possible with the existing links that confirms that information. There is an increasing number of predatory journals that show various unrealistic impact factors, so author must be well informed about what is important in science – the real publishing world. Authors by themselves can rely on reliable social media channels, sharing platforms (Research Gate, Linked In etc.), and individual and institutional repositories in order to improve visibility of their publications;

3. Registering with the Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID) for the potential authors, reviewers and editorial board members of *Materia Socio Medica* in order to increase visibility of their academic activities by and displaying information about own writing, reviewing and publishing activities on their permanent accounts. When writing the articles, authors should write their ORCID ID, which will certainly be used more, and will become a thing that will be essential for monitoring the work of one author;

4. Editorial team of *Materia Socio Medica* will be strengthened by broadening the Editorial Board membership and appointing additional section editors responsible for statistics, publication ethics (research integrity), English language etc.,

as well as skilled individuals involved in the processing of manuscripts for more effective functioning of the overall process for management of manuscripts till final decision for publishing and management of the journal;

5. *Materia Socio Medica* will support continuing professional development (CPD) by creating journal sections for students, ongoing researchers, and specialists interested in CPD credits, as well as by acknowledging contributors for publishing and reviewing activities;

6. *Materia Socio Medica* will adhere to the most updated recommendations of global editorial associations toward improving the peer-review process and quality of publications, as well as post-publication communication and to incorporate relevant points in the journal instructions. The quality of journal is, first of all, the mirror of the expertise of the reviewers. Reviewers of manuscripts would be experts in their fields, able to give clear and comprehensive review of the articles. They should point out the shortcomings of the article author/s need to overcome and to present clear instructions to editorial board about the quality of manuscripts. Editors, in correlation with the outcome of reviews, must clearly and kindly inform the authors for required revision of the manuscript, with an attachment of the review report, and eventually, in case of rejection, to inform authors where their manuscript could be forwarded/ submitted for possible publishing in some other journal. The journal would annually present, in the last issue of the year, a list of reviewers who contributed in the review process of manuscripts submitted for publishing during the year;

7. The new web-site of *Materia Socio Medica* will be upgraded and enriched with transparent information about editorial management, peer review, open access and acceptable editing practices. Transparency is one of the features for efficient work of the journal, as well as a condition for improved visibility of the journal and indexation. All members of the Editorial Board should be listed on the website, along with a short biography, and with ORCID ID (and Scopus ID), in order all future authors who apply their manuscripts to the journal to find information about the people who manage the journal, and their relevance to a particular branch of medicine;

8. Increasing the impact of *Materia Socio Medica* by improving the functionality of the journal website and online contents and assessing the use of journal and published papers through various traditional and alternative impact indicators (citations, downloads, and distributions through online channels);

9. Instructions to authors should be upgraded to provide comprehensive information about the journal, including guidelines which regularly improve the ethical standards, quality and implications of published articles. Template for preparation of an article would be available in journal's instructions. Authors must follow the template in writing an article. The structure that is set in operation of the journal, must be clearly traced. References in the article list must be properly cited and connected to the text, because they are of great importance in scientometric analysis;

10. Education of scientific community in research and publication ethics and integrity is essential for creating ethical environment and tradition to prevent scientific and publishing dishonesty, fraud and plagiarism. Education for raising

awareness regarding scientific and publishing ethics and integrity is necessary for potential authors, especially for young scientists, as well as for reviewers and editorial board members to promote and enhance the editing of the journal. Organized educational activities for the young scientists and potential authors regarding writing a scientific article and respecting the principles of the scientific communication and publishing ethics will be conducted at local, national and international level through the recently created Mediterranean Association of Science Editors and Publishers.

7. CONCLUSION

Materia Socio-Medica is one of the oldest Public health journals in Europe, established in 1978, and one of the most important journals for public health in South-Eastern Europe. The journal covers all important public health professional, academic and research areas in this field. *Materia Socio-Medica* will continue to improve the quality of the published papers and integrity and visibility of the journal in 2017 and beyond through increasing awareness and responsibility for promoting integrity, education of potential authors, reviewers and Editorial Board members, improving the peer review process and quality selection of reviewers, supportive editing of articles, and clearly defining instructions and ethical standards of the journal.

- Conflict of interest: none declared.

REFERENCES

- Masic I, Begic E, Zunic L, Donev D. Meta-analysis of the scientific contents of *Materia Socio-Medica* journal in the period 2009 – 2015. *Mat Soc Med* 2016; 28(1): 4-7.
- Masic I. Medical Publication and Scientometrics. *J Res Med Sci*. 2013 Jun; 18(6): 516-21.
- Masic I, Begic E. Scientometric Analysis of the Journals of the Academy of Medical Sciences in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Acta Inform Med*. 2016 Feb; 24(1): 4-10 doi: 10.5455/aim.2016.24.4-9.
- Masic I. Scientometric Analysis: analysis: a technical need for medical science researchers either as authors or as peer reviewers. *J Res Pharm Pract*. 2016 Jun-Mar; 5(1): 1-6. 10.41103/2279-042X.176562.
- ICMJE. Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals* - Updated December 2013. Available at: <http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>
- Committee on Publication Ethics. Promoting integrity in research publication. Available at: <http://publicationethics.org/>
- WAME. The Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing. Available at: <http://www.wame.org/News/Details/2>
- Masic I, Donev D, Sinanovic O, et al. The First Mediterranean Seminar on Science Writing, Editing and Publishing, Sarajevo, December 2-3, 2016. *Acta Inform Med*. 2016;24(6):424-35. doi:10.5455/aim.2016.24.424-435.
- Mašić I, Begić E, Donev DM, et al. Sarajevo Declaration on Integrity and Visibility of Scholarly Publications. *Croat Med J*. 2016;57(6):527-9. doi:10.3325/cmj.2016.57.527. Available at: <http://www.cmj.hr/2016/57/6/28051276.htm>
- Baždarić K, Pupovac V, Bilić-Zulle L, Petrovečki M. Plagiarism as a violation of scientific and academic integrity. *Medicina* 2009, Vol. 45, No. 2, p. 108-117.
- Wager E. Defining and responding to plagiarism. *Learned publishing* 2014; 27(1):33-42.
- Donev D. Plagiarism as a problem in scientific publishing. *IMJ Medicus* 2015; 20(3): 319–24. Available at: http://www.imjm.mk/pubs/IMJMVol_20_%283%29_2015.pdf
- Masic I. Plagiarism in Scientific Publishing. *Acta Inform Med*. 2012 Dec; 20(4). 208-13. Doi: 10.5455/aim.2013.20.208-213.
- Masic I. Ethical Aspects and Dilemmas of Preparing, Writing and Publishing of the Scientific Papers in the Biomedical Journals. *Acta Inform Med*. 2012 Sep; 20(3). 141-8. Doi: 10.5455/aim.2012.20.141.148.
- Richard Van Noorden. The scientists who get credit for peer review. *Nature*, Oct 9th, 2014. doi:10.1038/nature.2014.16102 Available at: <http://www.nature.com/news/the-scientists-who-get-credit-for-peer-review-1.16102>
- Donev D. New developments in publishing related to authorship. *Prilozi-Contributions, Sec. Biol. Med. Sci., MASA* 2014;35(3): 57-66. Available at: http://manu.edu.mk/prilozi/35_3/09-D_DONEV.pdf
- Wager E. How should journal editors respond to cases of suspected misconduct? *Prilozi-Contributions, Sec. Biol. Med. Sci., MASA* 2014;35(3): 95-101. Available at: http://manu.edu.mk/prilozi/35_3/14-E_WAGER.pdf
- Masic I, Sabzghabae AM. How clinicians can validate scientific contents? *Journal of Research in Medical Sciences*. 2014;