

## From the editor's desk: Benefits of open-access publishing

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Open-access publishing, which removes monetary and legal restrictions from Internet reading, provides benefits for readers and publishers alike. *Radiology Case Reports* has used an open-access publishing model from its inception.



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### What is open-access journal publishing?

Open-access publishing is the process of making scholarly material available to any reader via the Internet without restrictions. The main implications in this model are that there are no monetary or legal barriers to overcome when accessing the material.

Open-access scholarly material can be published in a single instance with relative ease. For example, a participant at a conference may quickly upload a presentation to share with those who could not attend the meeting on site. In this case, the time and expense incurred by the author is minimal, and the recipient requires only access to the Internet.

Scholarly material may also be published in a periodic fashion, in the form of journals. Journals represent the packaging of scholarly material into related categories of a specific field or segment of a field. Compared to “one-time” open-access publishing, journal publication is more costly and time-consuming, due to the need for editing and repeated production. In order to be sustainable, an open-access journal must have a means to cover its costs. Open-access journal publishing may rely on advertisements to cover the production costs. More commonly, it is made possible by subsidy from the author or an institution. The nominal cost incurred by the author or sponsoring institution facilitates the many benefits of open-access journal publishing.

### What are some benefits of open-access journal publishing?

Expanding evidence indicates the many benefits of open-access journal publishing (1). First, readers worldwide are able to access up-to-date literature. This is critical for developing countries whose health care systems are often fi-

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nancially restricted due to the costs required for developing infrastructure and providing patient care. Since the purchase of scholarly articles from a fee-based repository is often out of reach for a significant portion of the world, practitioners are not able to access much of the current information to develop a true evidence-based approach. Therefore, many health care workers in these situations routinely rely on the accuracy of information posted on the Internet.

Digital open-access journal publishing also fulfills the need for immediate access to information in a point-of-service environment; with the increasing widespread use of mobile Internet devices, an open-access journal publication is more likely to be used to answer a clinical question in real time than a print copy of a subscription journal.

While most subscription journals also offer an online version, the price of the subscription is often prohibitive for many users. As a corollary, many institutional libraries in developed countries cannot afford the subscription prices of many journals, requiring deferment of some journals or reallocation of the library budget to accommodate the ever-rising cost of journal subscriptions (2). Therefore, the costs of subscription-based information affect not only developing countries but are also a challenge for developed countries, where institutional financial challenges limit access to current information. In fact, institutions in several developed countries are limited by the requirement to pay a fee for research database access. In addition, these fee-based databases may search only a limited number of journals. Therefore, open-access journal publishing acts to counteract the global problem of information restriction and fosters the culture of evidence-based practice.

In addition to providing information to improve upon point-of-care service, the individual reader can apply the open-access material to facilitate research endeavors and collaboration. Researchers can more rapidly investigate the existing body of knowledge for a subject by staying current with the information made possible through open access. Researchers publishing in an open-access journal have the potential to reach a larger number of readers and a more diverse population compared with even the most popular subscription-based journals. The increased visibility afforded by an open-access journal can allow more international recognition and scientific impact in a shorter period. These factors have been proven to lead to increased collaboration and more frequent citations (3).

Also, the potential for more rapid dissemination of information in open-access journals decreases the likelihood of research duplication. And thanks to the electronic format of open-access publications, authors can cross-link a publication with datasets to allow more thorough evaluation of research methodology.

### How does *Radiology Case Reports* benefit from open-access publishing?

*Radiology Case Reports* provides a service to the scientific community through its commitment to open-access publishing and its focus. While case reports are not subjected to the scientific rigor of clinical trials, they serve a critical role in advancement of medical knowledge. Often, case reports serve as the first line of evidence and can initiate collaboration and hypothesis-driven research on a relatively new topic (4).

By providing a forum to report unexpected and unique results, combined with open access, *Radiology Case Reports* has the potential to make a concise but meaningful contribution to a large contingent of the radiology community. The strength of an open-access case report lies in its ability to quickly report not only rare diseases, but also unknown manifestations of known diseases, within a complete clinical scenario (5). With the above points in mind, we encourage submissions to our online open-access journal.

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