

Open Access Week 2011



From 24-30 October, we celebrated international Open Access Week, a globe event in its fifth year. According to www.openaccessweek.org, the event is "...an opportunity for the academic and research community to continue to learn about the potential benefits of Open Access, to share what they've learned with colleagues, and to help inspire wider participation in helping to

make Open Access a new norm in scholarship and research.

"'Open access' to information, free and immediate online access to the results of scholarly research and the right to use and re-use those results as you need, has the power to transform the way research and scientific inquiry are conducted. It has direct and widespread implications for academia, medicine, science, industry, and for society as a whole.

"Open access has the potential to maximise research investments, increase the exposure and use of published research, facilitate the ability to conduct research across available literature, and enhance the overall advancement of scholarship. Research-funding agencies, academic institutions, researchers and scientists, teachers, students, and members of the general public are supporting a move towards open access in increasing numbers every year. Open Access Week is a key opportunity for all members of the community to take action to keep this momentum moving forward."

Open access to research is growing at an impressive rate. According to the *Directory of Open Access Journals* (www.doaj.org), which has become the official index of open access journals, there are already at least 7 252 full-text open access journals. At least 6% of the articles of the prestigious *Web of Science* index are estimated to be open access.¹ The annual growth rate of new open access articles published varies between 20% and 30%, against the backdrop of an annual growth rate of only 3.5% in new research articles. It is therefore probable that, by 2029, almost all new research articles will be published as open access.²

The best way to publish open access research is directly, in an open access journal (also known as the "golden route") such as *South African Family Practice*. But, if you cannot find a suitable open access journal, you can also deposit the article published

in a toll or subscription access journal in a public archive (also known as the "gold route"), such as a university repository (the "green route"). Ninety per cent of toll or subscription access journals allow at least the final, approved version of an article (also known as the "post-print" version) to be placed in such a repository.³

There are moral, financial and practical reasons why the open access movement has been established, and why open access is growing strongly. PKP founder John Willinsky wrote: "A commitment to the value and quality of research carries with it the responsibility to extend the circulation of such work as far as possible, and ideally to all who are interested in it and all who might profit by it."⁴ This is particularly true in the field of medicine, where access to new research often means the alleviation of human suffering or preservation of life.

The sharp rise in the prices of subscription journals, three times above the inflation rate,⁵ forced university libraries to cancel subscriptions and created room for the establishment of open access journals. The cheaper open access business model can effect considerable savings across the board.

The open access route is also good for authors and journals. Authors can achieve much higher citation rates of their article and, as a result, journals indirectly benefit from higher impact factors.⁶

South African Family Practice is proud to be one of the first scholarly journals to have gone open access in South Africa, and will continue to publish the results of original research open access in the best interest of the public good.

Pierre JT de Villiers

Editor-in-Chief

E-mail: editor@safpj.co.za

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