

Editorial

An open access journal without biases

All authors who have submitted their manuscripts to a journal were ecstatic immediately after receiving the notice of acceptance from the journal's Editorial Office. However, this might soon become history. The scientific community has been encouraging publishers to opt for open access (OA) publishing and authors to contribute to OA journals¹⁾. The authors need to pay a large amount of money as an Article Processing Charge (APC) when their manuscript is accepted for publication, although discounts or exemptions are possible in some cases.

Usually, APC ranges from USD 2,000 to 4,000²⁾. However, some journals call for a more "reasonable" price. For example, *Journal of Occupational Health*, published by the Japan Society for Occupational Health, sets its APC at a slightly less expensive rate, that is, USD 850 for members and USD 1,250 for nonmembers. Our journal, *Industrial Health*, requires no APC, except for printing color figures.

Here, exchange rates matter. JPY has been weak against foreign currencies, which situation is disadvantageous to researchers in Japan. Authors working at Japanese institutions are required to pay a total of JPY 200,000 to the publisher if APC is USD 2,000 and 1 USD equals 100 JPY. Similarly, if 1 USD is equal to 150 JPY, its cost increases to JPY 300,000.

We know that publishing an article is the social and scientific responsibility of researchers, but its high expense may result in great difficulty in managing the limited funding. A principal investigator or project leader may have to decide to prioritize APC over costs for other items. This circumstance can become more serious among young scientists with insufficient research funding, researchers

who are missing a Grant, and occupational health and safety practitioners who work at a company. Furthermore, authors in low- and middle-income countries/regions may give up submitting their papers to OA journals even if a discounted rate is available.

These APC issues could raise a critical question as to whether or not selection biases occur^{3, 4)}. Specifically, papers only by authors who can pay expensive APC will appear in a particular journal. Many advantages are acknowledged in the OA model⁵⁾. Therefore, we need to discuss how to manage the potential problems associated with the monetary requirements.

References

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