

Closing time for *CMAJ Open*

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CMAJ Group has published the last issue of *CMAJ Open* this week. In March 2023, the leadership of CMAJ Group made the difficult decision to close *CMAJ Open* in response to budget cuts.¹ Following the announcement, *CMAJ Open* stopped accepting new submissions, but editors continued to process all submitted manuscripts. The 4 articles published Dec. 19, 2023, are the last of those. As the sun sets on *CMAJ Open*, I reflect on its activity over the past 11 years and what this Open Access research journal has meant for CMAJ Group and for health researchers in Canada.

In October 2012, then editor of *CMAJ*, Dr. John Fletcher, announced the launch of *CMAJ Open*,² proposing that “launching *CMAJ Open* will provide researchers, particularly Canadian researchers, with greater opportunity to disseminate the results of their work to Canadian and international audiences.” The journal’s title reflected 4 main principles: Open Access, open to research in all medical disciplines, open to a variety of methodologies, and open peer review. As a fully Open Access journal, all published articles were made freely available and accessible to anyone anywhere. This will remain true for *CMAJ Open* articles beyond 2023. The 11 volumes of *CMAJ Open* will still be hosted at <https://www.cmajopen.ca/> for the foreseeable future, and the journal’s archive will be available on PubMed Central (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/journals/2389/>) indefinitely.

Manuscripts published in *CMAJ Open* had to demonstrate methodological validity but did not need to demonstrate the same degree of novelty and impact required for research published in *CMAJ*. As a result, the CMAJ Group was able to publish a wide variety of research across all medical disciplines. While the majority of *CMAJ Open* papers are clinical in nature, many intersect with environmental science, public health and sociology. *CMAJ Open* provided authors with a prominent and accessible repository for publishing research employing a diversity of study designs, including case series, descriptive studies, economic evaluations, qualitative research and surveys.

The open peer review model employed by *CMAJ Open* was new for the CMAJ Group. The term “open peer review” has been used to refer to various practices intended to increase transparency in the peer review process. Peer review for papers submitted to *CMAJ Open* was unblinded from the launch of the journal, and peer reviews were published as supplements (found in the “related content” tab) with all articles. We are grateful to the peer reviewers who signed their names to their

thoughtful and constructive feedback and hope that these reviews and the authors’ responses, along with the original submissions, may continue to be used as a learning resource for authors and peer reviewers.

Over the past 11 years, 2143 manuscripts were submitted to *CMAJ Open*, 1041 of which were published. In 2018, a dedicated collection was created specifically for patient-oriented research; studies in this collection specified how patients were engaged as part of the research team and how their contributions developed the work.³ Advising editors on the collection were a panel of researchers and patients from across Canada, led by Drs. Maryam Kebbe and Diane Aubin. The 20 articles in the collection can be accessed at https://www.cmajopen.ca/patient_oriented_resrch. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, *CMAJ Open* published 108 research papers that could not be published in *CMAJ*. We hope that *CMAJ Open*’s COVID-19 collection (<https://www.cmajopen.ca/covid-19>) will serve as a resource for clinicians, policy-makers and researchers preparing for future public health emergencies.

It has been my great pleasure and privilege to have had the opportunity to work with outstanding authors, peer reviewers, editors, statisticians, editorial board members and advisory panelists on *CMAJ Open* over its 11-year history, latterly as its editor-in-chief. I am confident that the work published under the banner of *CMAJ Open* will continue to be of value to readers for years to come.

References

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3. Patrick K, Kebbe M, Aubin D. A home for patient-oriented research. *CMAJ* 2018; 190:E607.

Competing interests: www.cmaj.ca/staff

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