

SLOVENIAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH: THE JOURNEY SO FAR AND THE ROAD AHEAD

REVIJA ZDRAVSTVENO VARSTVO: POTOVANJE DO SEDAJ IN POT NAPREJ

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ABSTRACT

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The Slovenian Journal of Public Health, established 63 years ago as the official publication of the National Institute of Public Health in Slovenia, was initially aimed at tracking the development of public health in Slovenia and disseminating scientific advancements to professionals in the field. In 2000, a new editorial board took over and shifted the journal's focus towards enhancing scientific rigour and achieving international recognition. This strategic transformation led to the journal being indexed in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) in 2009, specifically within the category of Public, Environmental & Occupational Health. The indexing enabled the journal to acquire its first impact factor in 2011, which has demonstrated a consistent upward trajectory, currently standing at 1.6 (IF2023). The journal has recently ascended to the third quartile of its field and is now recognised as the second highest-ranked medical journal in Slovenia. Following over two decades of successful leadership, the journal is poised to enter a new phase under an incoming editor-in-chief. It is imperative for the journal to sustain its contributions to public health by promoting high-quality scientific publications and facilitating critical discourse among researchers.

IZVLEČEK

Ključne besede:

mednarodne
znanstvene revije
znanstveno
publiciranje
javno zdravje
uredništva

Revija Zdravstveno Varstvo, ustanovljena pred 63 leti kot uradna publikacija Nacionalnega inštituta za javno zdravje, je bila prvotno namenjena spremljanju razvoja javnega zdravja v Sloveniji in širjenju znanstvenih dosežkov strokovnjakov na tem področju. Leta 2000 je novi uredniški odbor prevzel vodenje in usmeril revijo v smeri krepitve znanstvene odličnosti in doseganja mednarodne prepoznavnosti. Ta strateška preobrazba je vodila do tega, da je bila revija leta 2009 indeksirana v Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), natančneje v kategoriji Javno, okoljsko in poklicno zdravje. Indeksiranje je leta 2011 reviji omogočilo pridobitev prvega faktorja vpliva, ki je od takrat kazal dosleden trend naraščanja in trenutno znaša 1,6 (IF2023). Revija se je pred kratkim uvrstila v tretji kvartil na svojem področju in je zdaj druga najvišje uvrščena medicinska revija v Sloveniji. Po več kot dveh desetletjih uspešnega vodenja bo revija pod vodstvom prihajajoče odgovorne urednice vstopila v novo poglavje. Nujno je, da revija ohrani svoj prispevek k javnemu zdravju s spodbujanjem visokokakovostnih znanstvenih objav in omogočanjem kritičnega diskurza med raziskovalci.

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1 INTRODUCTION

“πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει.” Ἡράκλειτος (in Greek)
“Everything changes and nothing stands still.”

Heraclitus (535 BC-475 BC)

They say that change is the only constant in life and that everything comes to an end. The end is, in fact, an opportunity to take a hilltop view of the road travelled, analyse the rainbow of encounters and experiences, and pass on wisdom to those who will follow.

2 THE JOURNEY SO FAR

The Slovenian Journal of Public Health was established 63 years ago as the official journal of the National Institute of Public Health, Slovenia. Its initial objective was to monitor the evolution of public health in Slovenia and disseminate scientific achievements to professionals in the field. This focus persisted for approximately four decades, during which the journal did not pursue international recognition or attain a significant professional reputation. In 2000, a new editorial board assumed leadership and redirected the journal's trajectory towards enhancing scientific rigour and achieving international recognition. Over the two decades that followed, the editorial team undertook several strategic and sometimes challenging changes, including reducing the number of annual issues from ten to four (approximately 35 articles per year) and transitioning to an English-only publication format, with abstracts provided in both English and Slovenian. These transformative efforts culminated in 2009 when the journal was indexed in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) under the category of Public, Environmental & Occupational Health (1). This indexing facilitated the acquisition of an impact factor, which was first achieved in 2011. Since then, the impact factor has shown a consistent upward trend, reaching a current value of 1.6 (IF2023). The journal has recently entered the third quartile within its field and is now recognised as the second highest-ranked medical journal in Slovenia.

In addition to achieving scientific excellence, the Slovenian Journal of Public Health expanded its readership on a global scale through its indexation in prominent citation databases, namely Web of Science and Scopus. Furthermore, by indexing in the PubMed database, articles published in the journal became openly accessible also via the PubMed Central Repository, and not only the De Gruyter/Sciendopublisher.

In 2010, the editorial board initiated the development of a web edition of the journal (2), facilitated by De Gruyter, an independent academic publisher renowned for its extensive coverage across various disciplines. The implementation of the Editorial Manager system began in 2011, with enhancements introduced in 2023.

These strategic initiatives have enabled the journal to establish a global presence, resulting in submissions from authors worldwide. Consequently, numerous significant contributions have been published over the years that garnered international attention and were cited in esteemed journals such as *Nutrients*, *PLoS One*, *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, *Sustainability*, *Current Psychology*, *Frontiers in Public Health*, *Scientific Reports*, *Vaccines* and *BMC Public Health*, among others.

3 THE CURRENT OUTLOOK

The December 2024 issue will mark the conclusion of the tenure of the current editor-in-chief. After more than two decades, the journal will enter a new chapter under the guidance of Assist. Prof. Dr. Jerneja Farkaš Lainščak, who will assume the role of incoming editor-in-chief. Prof. Lainščak possesses extensive expertise in public health, with particular strengths in clinical epidemiology and the prevention of noncommunicable diseases. She has demonstrated a unique capacity to integrate diverse medical disciplines that may initially appear unrelated but can collectively contribute to significant research and clinical outcomes (3).

The journal boasts a rich legacy, built upon the knowledge, skills and dedicated voluntary efforts of its editorial board, section editors and notably Mrs. Saša Zupanič, the executive editor. However, the true asset of the journal lies in its reviewers. The commitment of these reviewers to uphold rigorous standards has been instrumental in developing the journal's reputation. This dedication has resulted in a rejection rate of approximately 80%, which, while not favourable among authors, is essential for maintaining the journal's success in today's competitive academic environment. This rigorous review process has streamlined subsequent editorial activities and significantly enhanced the journal's international standing.

4 THE ROAD AHEAD

Moving forward, the journal will adhere to established guidelines for article selection, with a continued emphasis on quality scientific publishing as a fundamental priority. The journal aims to sustain and enhance its role in showcasing significant advancements within the broad field of public health in Slovenia, as well as across Central and South East Europe.

Authors have expressed appreciation for the prompt responses from editors; even negative decisions are communicated swiftly, contributing to a trademark of efficiency. Although sometimes contentious (4, 5), the impact factor remains a critical metric for ranking journals

and assessing scientific performance; thus, efforts will be made to achieve higher impact factor values in the coming years. Refreshing the editorial board and expanding the network of reviewers will be vital components of future development, particularly in addressing emerging public health issues arising from an aging population that have not been sufficiently emphasised to date. To remain relevant in an increasingly visual and digital world, a graphic redesign is needed alongside an enhanced presence on social media platforms. Incorporating podcasts that discuss current editorials and feature articles will be integral to scientific communication and will help drive altmetric scores.

Strengthening connections or establishing new networks with editors of related journals—especially those affiliated with national public health institutes internationally—will also be prioritised. The journal will actively engage its community by encouraging participation as reviewers and social media ambassadors. In this, we will specifically focus on generations Y and Z, with those representing generations X and baby boomers serving as mentors and supervisors. This intergenerational collaboration is essential for knowledge transfer and professional development, especially as younger generations are characterised by their digital savviness but may lack experience in peer-reviewing and editorial decision making (6).

Contextually, the journal's ambition to transition from descriptive research to interventions at the whole population level aligns with broader trends in scientific publishing that emphasise the necessity for community-oriented research that not only describes health issues but also proposes actionable interventions. The focus on public health interventions therefore reflects an understanding that research must have tangible benefits for society, which is increasingly recognised as a critical aspect of impactful research (7). Across the board, all the measures demonstrate the international aspirations of the journal, which nowadays is not only feasible and possible but necessary in the scientific publishing arena.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The Slovenian Journal of Public Health has evolved over time to achieve significant scientific and international recognition. Joining this new editorial team presents both a privilege and a challenge, underscoring the importance of upholding previously established standards while maintaining journal autonomy. The transition period is expected to ensure continuity in scientific excellence. It is crucial for the journal to continue making substantial contributions to innovative public health research aimed at improving sustainable health outcomes for populations.

Our objective remains steadfast: to enhance public health by promoting the publication of high-quality scientific articles in this domain and fostering critical exchanges of ideas.

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AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

LLM STATEMENT

During the preparation of this work the authors used the large language model Perplexity.ai in order to linguistically improve the manuscript. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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