

Introductory Editorial

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There is a growing need for timely publication and easy access to original and innovative data reflecting novel insights in knowledge relating to all aspects of reproduction especially as it pertains to human health. In response to this need and the problems posed by conventional print journals: high subscription prices and restrictive copyright policies which prevent authors from reaching all but a small proportion of their audience, the open access publishing model has been developed. Open access journals cost nothing to read and are freely accessed via the internet.

It is with pleasure therefore that this medium is being used to launch a new peer journal named *Reproductive Biology Insights*, in collaboration with Libertas Academica, a publisher of open access (OA) journals. OA journals are freely available to readers through the world-wide web without copyright or licensing restrictions or fees such as pay-per-view.

Reproductive Biology Insights will focus on all aspects of reproduction in vertebrates, particularly human. The journal covers the more scientific aspects of the field, with the aim of better health for parent and offspring through research and knowledge.

This includes gametogenesis, fertilization, early embryonic development, embryo-uterus interaction, reproductive development, pregnancy, uterine biology, endocrinology of reproduction, control of reproduction, reproductive immunology, neuroendocrinology, and reproductive medicine.

There are many degrees and kinds of wider and easier access to the literature on reproductive processes. Open access to this literature means it is freely available on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited. This easy accessibility of articles in *Reproductive Biology Insights* provides an excellent niche for the new journal in its head-on competition with a number of existing subscription-based journals. This accessibility allows academicians and the public access to information about how their reproductive health is affected by changes in the formation of gametes and subsequent development of fertilized eggs. This freedom of access is coupled with rigorous, fair and prompt standards of peer review. The same procedures, standards, and selection of reviewers are followed as are used in conventional journals.

Reproductive Biology Insights is published exclusively online. Articles will follow a consistent format so that the visual impact will be high and equal to that of the best hard-copy publications. In contrast to paper-based journals, however, the electronic format allows the full use of digital technologies and permits the inclusion of large data sets, from field and laboratory studies, links to other web pages, animations, slide shows, video clips and unlimited colour, all at no additional charge. Open access means that all articles are freely available to all, worldwide, and at no cost to the reader. Authors retain copyright of their work and can grant anyone the right to reproduce and disseminate it, provided that it is correctly cited and no errors are introduced, under the Creative Commons CC-BY licence.

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In hard-copy journals, the costs of publication are met by subscriptions, paid by the reader. In *Reproductive Biology Insights* as in other open access journals, these costs are borne by the author in the form of a publication processing fee. Many grant-awarding bodies recognise the value of open access publishing by allowing their funds to be used for PPFs. Fee waivers and discounts are available on a case-by-case basis, and we shall make every effort to ensure that lack of funds does not impede the overall objective of publishing the best science, irrespective of authorship or country of origin. OA publishing is royalty-free and authors effectively give their work to the world without expectation of payment.

OA publishing is compatible with peer review and rigorous, objective peer review is mandatory for *Reproductive Biology Insights*. Reviewers donate their labour, but there are considerable costs involved in organising peer review. The costs involved are largely in the time and information technologies required to distribute files, monitor progress and enforce deadlines, collating and distributing comments, facilitating communication and organising versions of manuscripts.

It is unlikely that open access, online journals will totally replace the traditional print format in the immediate future, although this may be an increasing trend with time. It is certain, however,

that the benefits of online publication, and the extra opportunities that digital technologies give to authors, will be increasingly recognised. Open access is of huge benefit to the researchers working in institutions around the world where institutional libraries are unable to afford subscription fees for a full range of journals.

A major argument in favour of OA publishing is that publicly-funded research should be freely available. The US National Institutes of Health has a policy to require free online access to peer-reviewed journal articles that arise from its funding.

While accessing OA journal content is without costs to readers, OA publishing is not truly free; it takes a different approach to covering the economic costs of production where readers are not charged and barriers to access are not created. In this sense OA publishing can be compared to radio or free-to-air television: those with an interest in disseminating information pay the cost of doing so in exchange for there being no barriers to accessing this information.

It is expected that *Reproductive Biology Insights* will attract manuscripts of the highest quality which are of the greatest possible benefit to readers. Peer review is undertaken by at least two leading experts in the area of the manuscript.

For more information, please refer to the 'About This Journal' section of the website.