



European Medical Students' Association

Association Européenne des Étudiants en Médecine

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Open Access

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The European Medical Students' Association (EMSA) represents medical students across Europe. We envision a healthy and solidary Europe in which medical students actively promote health. EMSA empowers medical students to advocate health in all policies, excellence in medical research, interprofessional healthcare education and the protection of human rights across Europe.

Problem Statement

Research has played a vital and very essential role in the advancement of Medical Science. However, the majority of Research Publications that are being produced are not available for free and they require heavy financial amounts from individuals and institutions to access them.

Open Access (from now on being referred as OA) is the practice which refers to the unrestricted, perpetual and cost-free access to individual content and work on the Internet, as long as the original authorship is properly credited (Stratmann, 2003) (Suber, 2003). More precisely, according to its first definition in the Budapest Open Access Initiative in February 2002, it involves the right of users to read, download, copy, distribute, print and link to full texts or use them for any lawful purpose (Budapest Open Access Initiative, 2012).

In financial terms, Open Access also poses a dilemma. The escalating costs of purchasing journals to view content has suppressed its access to many potential users. Also there are people standing up for accessibility. The advocates defend that scientific research is mostly government-funded; therefore, taxpayers should have the right to access that research since they have already paid for it (Fox & Duggan, 2013).

Our View. Aim.

Access to scientific knowledge is an undeniable human right. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.” (UN, 1948).

EMSA strongly believes in the importance of Open Access in Research to avert this situation and to ensure a new environment in which Individuals and Institutions will have unlimited access to Research Outcomes regardless of their financial, social or academic status. An Open Access Environment where Researchers will profit fairly for their work and in which Research and Science will advance at an even faster pace.

Most researchers and students depend on their university libraries to access scientific literature; however, subscription costs of paid journals have become so expensive that even well-known universities have encouraged their faculty members to publish in open access journals or had to end subscriptions to major publishers, while major publishers’ profit margins are drastically high (Buranyi, 2017; RELX, 2018; Sample, 2012; UC, 2019). Inability to access previous research results is a serious impediment to scientific advancement, as every scientific research is building upon resources and data that have been produced by previous research.

EMSA has promoted awareness about Open Access through sessions such as “EMSA Access in Action” in partnership with the EU Foster Project (FOSTER, 2020). This educational event on Open Access was hosted by Berlin in 2015 and focused on educating EMSA students to pass on their values to practices at home. This was done through both general and specialised workshops on research management, scientific writing and publishing as well as the implementation and advocacy for Open Access.

Recommendations

EMSA. HEALTH. EUROPE. TOGETHER.

EMSA calls upon the European Governments to:

- Provide training and raise Awareness, (via libraries) about the practice of Open Access and the risks of predatory journals.
- Emit a list of appropriate and trusted Open Access journals for students to consult and publish research.
- Allocate funds towards aiding students and Researchers to Access Articles and Research Papers without having to pay for Article Processing Charges by themselves.
- Encourage researchers to publish their work on Open Access Journals ,so it can be easily accessible, and provide them with specific incentives for doing so.
- Donate towards the maintenance of Open Access Journals or related support structures, such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).
- Enforce methods and softwares that will detect plagiarism and promote Academic Honesty.
- Make a transition to alternative Open Access journals in order to adjust for possible cost-related cancellation of subscription journals in libraries.

EMSA calls upon the European Institutions to:

- Implement the values and plans related to Open Science established in the Horizon 2020 programme (European Commission Decision C(2019)4575 of 2 July 2019, 2019).
- Consider the roles of both larger traditional-model publishers and smaller Open Access journals in the drafting of policies of Open Science.
- Continue attributing funding towards public-funded research and scholarships for Open Access research.
- Promote the development and integration of structures supporting Open Science in scientific and academic institutions across the European Union and its Member States.
- Enforce standards to guarantee quality in Open Access publishing, namely in peer review and academic honesty.
- Work towards collaboration and agreements between all shareholders involved in Open Access towards its transition.

EMSA calls upon Researchers and Scientists to:

- Publish their Research Work on Open Access Journals.
- Endorse, promote and communicate the Importance of Open Access to their Colleagues and Students.
- Integrate the values of Open Access in their research process.
- Cooperate with their Universities/Institutions to obtain the funding that may be required for Article Processing Charges in Open Access journals.

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- Use resources found on Open Access depositories and Journals as a basis for their own research publications in order to support the Open Access Community.
 - Advocate towards Universities' Administrations for the implementation of Open Access practices.
 - Ensure standards in Academic Honesty within the Open Access community, specifically in the citation of others authors' work.
 - Focus on peer reviewing Open Access papers in order to raise their quality and reliability.

EMSA calls upon Research Publication Houses to:

- Adopt open access business models for their journals.
- Design and adopt business models that will minimise or eliminate article processing charges in order to encourage research authors to publish their articles in open access journals.
- Use adequate software to prevent plagiarism from open access articles.
- Ensure articles' quality by implementing a reliable peer-review process in journals.
- Promote the importance and advantages of publishing in open access journals to research authors.

EMSA calls upon Faculty Member Organizations (FMOs) and Medical Students to:

- Organise Activities, Workshops and Campaigns on Open Access that will raise the Awareness of the Students and educate them on the issue.
- Promote the values and the importance of Open Access across student-led Medical Science activities, such as Student medical journals and research projects.
- Advocate, as Medical Student's Representatives, to Research Supervisors and Universities' Administrations for the endorsement of Open Access on a local level.
- Join the Right to Research Coalition which states that no student should be denied access to the Research material they might need.

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