



BALKAN MEDICAL JOURNAL

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF TRAKYA UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF MEDICINE

Citation Abbreviation: Balkan Med J (Formerly Trakya Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Dergisi)

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Owner: Trakya University Faculty of Medicine Deanery, Edirne, Turkey ©

Responsible Manager: Cem UZUN

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Yayın Tarihi: Yerel Süreli
Basım Tarihi: Eylül 2014
Basım Yeri: ADA Ofset Matbaacılık
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EDITORIAL POLICY

v.4.1 (updated September 2014)

AIMS AND SCOPE

The Balkan Medical Journal is a peer-reviewed open-access international journal that publishes interesting clinical and experimental research conducted in all fields of medicine, interesting case reports and clinical images, invited reviews, editorials, letters, comments and letters to the Editor including reports on publication and research ethics. The journal is the official scientific publication of the Trakya University Faculty of Medicine, Edirne, Turkey and is printed four times a year, in March, June, September and December. The language of the journal is English.

The journal is based on independent and unbiased double-blinded peer-reviewed principles. Only unpublished papers that are not under review for publication elsewhere can be submitted. The authors are responsible for the scientific content of the material to be published. The Balkan Medical Journal reserves the right to request any research materials on which the paper is based.

The Balkan Medical Journal encourages and enables academicians, researchers, specialists and primary care physicians of Balkan countries to publish their valuable research in all branches of medicine. The primary aim of the journal is to publish original articles with high scientific and ethical quality and serve as a good example of medical publications in the Balkans as well as in the World.

The Editorial Board of the Balkan Medical Journal and the Publisher adheres to the principles of the International Council of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), the Council of Science Editors (CSE), the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the US National Library of Medicine (NLM), the World Medical Association (WMA), the US Office of Research Integrity (ORI), the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), and the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE).

The Balkan Medical Journal is indexed in CAB Abstracts, Chemical Abstracts, CINAHL, DOAJ, EBSCO, EMBASE, Global Health, Google Scholar, Index Copernicus, Journal Citation Reports, PubMed Central, Science Citation Index Expanded (Web of Science), Scopus and ULAKBIM Turkish Medical Database databases. Printed copies of the journal are distributed to over 150 university libraries in 14 Balkan countries and all around the World. All articles are also available in PDF format on our website (www.balkanmedicaljournal.org) and can be downloaded free of charge.

MISSION

The Balkan Medical Journal's mission is to distribute and expand medical data to the World as well as build a supportive and vibrant community of scholars to connect and explore ideas by publishing articles related to all fields of medicine. In addition to the educational material and links available on the journal's webpage, the Balkan Medical Journal Editorial Board has also been organizing educational meetings in the subjects of medical research, writing and scientific ethics.

The Balkan Medical Journal believes that quality and ethical research and publication will lead to the progress of medical sciences and healthcare in Balkan countries as well as worldwide.

EDITORIAL PROCESS AND PEER REVIEW

All manuscripts submitted for publication are strictly reviewed for their originality, methodology, importance, quality, ethical nature and suitability for the journal. The Balkan Medical Journal uses a well-constructed scheme for the evaluation process. The editor-in-chief has full authority over the editorial and scientific content of the Balkan Medical Journal and the timing of publication of the content.

The whole editorial and peer review process can be divided into 20 successive steps:

1. 1st technical review by the Editorial Secretary
2. 1st review by the Editor-in-Chief: [immediate reject, immediate revision or further evaluation]
3. 1st review by the Section Editors (and/or Associate Editors)
4. 1st similarity check
5. 1st evaluation at the weekly Editorial Board Meeting
6. 2nd review by the Editor-in-Chief: [immediate reject, immediate revision or further evaluation]
7. 1st review by two or more external reviewers
8. 1st review by a Biostatistician
9. 2nd technical review by the Editorial Secretary



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10. 2nd evaluation by the Section Editors
11. Revisions (if needed)
12. 2nd evaluation at the weekly Editorial Board Meeting
13. 3rd review by the Editor-in-Chief [reject or revision]
14. 2nd similarity recheck
15. Assignment of DOI number
16. Copy editing
17. Galley proof preparation
18. Final review by the Editorial Secretary, Section Editors and the Editor-in-Chief
19. 3rd similarity check
20. Publication

Technical reviews are typically processed one week after submission. From stage 2 to 7, the evaluation usually takes 1 to 3 weeks. From stage 7 to 14, the overall evaluation takes 2 to 10 weeks. Starting February 2013, the publication process after submission may take 2 to 6 months. However, all accepted manuscripts are assigned with a DOI number following their acceptance and they are published Ahead of Print prior to their inclusion in their scheduled issue.

Very few manuscripts are rejected at the 2nd stage. About one-third of manuscripts are accepted for further evaluation at the 6th stage. The remaining manuscripts may be accepted at the 13th stage.

Overall, the acceptance rate of the Balkan Medical Journal is between 10% and 15%, and the median response time for all submissions is 3 weeks (2 weeks for rejected papers, and for accepted papers, 5 weeks for the first revision request by the external reviewers). The median overall response time for accepted papers is 13 weeks because the editors and reviewers of the Balkan Medical Journal usually need to assist authors to improve their papers through several revisions to increase the quality of the articles published in the journal.

ETHICS

The Balkan Medical Journal is committed to the highest standards of research and publication ethics, and does not allow any form of plagiarism. All submitted manuscripts are screened with plagiarism software at least two times during the evaluation process to detect instances of overlapping and similar text. High similarity scores (>20%) may lead rejection of a manuscript. The editors will act in accordance with the relevant international rules of publication and research ethics (COPE guidelines, WAME resources, WMA policies and ORI) if any ethical misconduct is suspected.

In accordance with the journal's policy, an approval of research protocols by an ethics committee in accordance with international agreements "WMA Declaration of Helsinki - Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (last updated: October 2013, Fortaleza, Brazil)", "Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals (8th edition, 2011)" and/or "International Guiding Principles for Biomedical Research Involving Animals (2012)" is required for all experimental, clinical and drug trial studies. For articles concerning experimental research on humans, a statement should be included that shows informed consent of patients and volunteers was obtained following a detailed explanation of the procedures that they may undergo. The journal may request a copy of the Ethics Committee Approval received from the relevant authority. Informed consent must also be obtained for case reports. More details on the ethical principles of the journal may be found at the "Ethical Guidelines" and the "Instructions to Reviewers" pages.

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The Balkan Medical Journal's editorial review process is in accordance with the Good Editorial Practice set by international editorial organizations (WAME, COPE). WAME indicates that "conflict of interest exists when an author, reviewer, or editor in the publication process (submission of manuscripts, peer review, editorial decisions, and communication between authors, reviewers and editors) has a competing interest that could unduly influence his or her responsibilities (academic honesty, unbiased conduct and reporting of research, and integrity of decisions or judgments) in the publication process".

The Balkan Medical Journal requires that each author, reviewer, and editor must disclose to the editor-in-chief any conflict of interest related to family, personal, financial, political or religious issues as well as any competing interest outlined above at the WAME's definition. Whether or not a conflict of interest and financial support exist, they must be declared at the *Conflict of Interest Statement* as well as at the end of the manuscripts. If a reviewer, an associate editor, or a section editor has a conflict of interest and/or believes that it is not appropriate to be a reviewer, or an editor for a given manuscript, the reviewer or the editor should resign from the assignment. The Editorial Board members of the Balkan Medical Journal may also submit their own



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manuscripts to the journal (since September 2014). However, they cannot take place at any stage on the editorial decision of their manuscripts. They will be treated like any other author, and if any, final acceptance of such manuscripts can only be made by the positive recommendation of at least two external reviewers.

Authors should not contact any of the section editors during the review process. All necessary information regarding the process of a manuscript can be obtained from the editorial office. However, the names of the handling editor and the reviewers are not given to the author(s). Due to the Balkan Medical Journal's double-blinded review principles, the names of authors and reviewers are not known to the other.

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Manuscript format must be in accordance with the ICMJE Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals (updated in August 2013 - <http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>). Papers that do not comply with the format of the Journal will be returned to the author for correction without further review. Therefore, to avoid loss of time and work, authors must carefully review the submission rules.

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All abbreviations in the text must be defined the first time they are used (both in the abstract and the main text), and the abbreviations should be displayed in parentheses after the definition. Abbreviations should be limited to those defined in the AMA Manual of Style, current edition. Authors should avoid abbreviations in the title and abstract and limit their use in the main text.

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Identification of article type is the first step of manuscript submission because article type dictates the guidelines that should be used (see below, Using Guidelines), including formatting and word limits of the manuscript. The main categories of article type are outlined below:

- **Original Article:** Original contributions are manuscripts containing substantial novel research. These articles can include randomized controlled trials, observational (cohort, case-control or cross-sectional) studies, destructive studies, diagnostic accuracy studies, systematic reviews and meta-analyses, non-randomized behavioral and public health intervention trials, experimental animal trials, or any other clinical or experimental studies. Abstracts should not exceed 400 words and should be structured with the following subheadings: Background, Aims, Study Design (case control study, cross sectional study, cohort study, randomized controlled trial, diagnostic accuracy study, meta-analysis and systemic review, animal experimentation, non-randomized study in behavioral sciences and public health, etc.), Methods, Results, and Conclusion. The main text should be structured with the following subheadings: Introduction, Material and Methods, Results, Discussion, Acknowledgments, References, Tables, and Figure Legends. The main text should not exceed 3000 words, excluding the abstract, ref-

Type of the Manuscript	Word Limit	Abstract Word Limit	Reference Limit	Author Limit ⁶
Original Article	3000 ¹	400 ⁴	30	None
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Case Report	1200 ¹	250 ⁵	10	5
Clinical Image	500 ²	N/A	5	5
Letter	500 ³	N/A	5	4

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ferences, tables, and figure legends. There should be a maximum of 30 references.

- **Invited Review Article:** Invited review articles are comprehensive analyses of specific topics in medicine, which are written upon invitation due to extensive experience and publications of authors on the review subjects. All invited review articles will also undergo peer review prior to acceptance. Review articles must not exceed 5000 words for the main text (excluding references, tables, and figure legends) and 400 words for the abstract. A review article can be signed by no more than 5 authors and can have no more than 60 references.
- **Case Report:** Interesting rare cases containing a substantial novel finding can be reported. Cases should be unique, representing a diagnostic or therapeutic challenge and having a learning point for the readers. Abstracts of case reports should mainly include information about the case and should be limited to a maximum of 250 words. The abstract must begin on a separate page and should be structured with the following subheadings: Background, Case Report and Conclusion. The main text of case reports should be structured with the following subheadings: Introduction, Case Report, Discussion, and References. Case reports must not exceed 1200 words (excluding references, tables, and figure legends). Case reports can be signed by no more than 5 authors and can have no more than 10 references and 5 figures or tables.
- **Clinical Image:** For educational purposes, the journal publishes original, interesting, and high quality clinical images having a brief explanation (maximum 500 words excluding references but including figure legends) and of educational significance. The figure legend should contain no more than 100 words. It can be signed by no more than 5 authors and can have no more than 5 references and 1 figure or table. Any information that might identify the patient or hospital, including the date, should be removed from the image. An abstract is not required with this type of manuscripts. The main text of clinical images should be structured with the following subheadings: Case, and References.
- **Letter to the Editor:** Letters in reference to a journal article must not exceed 500 words (excluding references). Letters not related to a journal article must also not exceed 500 words (excluding references). An abstract is not required with this type of manuscripts. A letter can be signed by no more than

4 authors and can have no more than 5 references and 1 figure or table.

- **Other:** Editorials, reviewer commentaries, book reviews, and reports on publication and research ethics are requested by the Editorial Board.

Clinical Trials and Reporting Guidelines

The Balkan Medical Journal encourages the registration of all clinical trials via ClinicalTrials.gov (www.clinicaltrials.gov) or one of the registries of the WHO's International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP: <http://www.who.int/ictrp/network/primary/en/index.html>). Especially the phase 3 clinical trials must be registered at or before the time of first patient enrollment. The name of the registry and the registration number should be provided at the end of the abstract.

Authors should also refer to the guidelines below when preparing their manuscript:

- **Randomized controlled trials**
CONSORT (<http://www.consort-statement.org/home/>)
- **CONSORT translations**
www.consort-statement.org/consort-statement-translations/
- **Standard protocol items for randomized trials**
SPRIT (<http://www.spirit-statement.org/>)
- **Observational research: cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies**
STROBE (www.strobe-statement.org)
- **Diagnostic accuracy studies**
STARD (www.stard-statement.org)
- **Systematic reviews and meta-analyses**
PRISMA (www.prisma-statement.org)
- **Non-randomized behavioral and public health intervention trials**
TREND (www.cdc.gov/trendstatement)
- **Experimental animal trials**
ARRIVE (www.nc3rs.org.uk/arrive)
- **For further information on the reporting guidelines for health research, authors are suggested to refer to the EQUATOR network website**
(<http://www.equator-network.org/>)

PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF A MANUSCRIPT

The entire submission process for a manuscript is completed online through the self-explanatory online submission system through the following website: <http://mc04.manuscript-central.com/balkanmedj>. The submission should be divided into SEPARATE files in the following order:

1. Cover Letter
2. Title Page
3. Main Document (Main text, references, tables, and figure legends. Abstract of the manuscript should be submitted through the submission system)



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4. Figures
5. Authorship Contributions Form
6. Copyright Transfer Form
7. Conflict of Interest Statement Form
8. Turkish Abstract (Only required for submissions from Turkey)

Cover Letter

The cover letter should include the article title, article type, and the full name of the corresponding author. The corresponding author should briefly summarize why his/her paper is a valuable addition to the scientific literature and specify the type of article he/she is submitting (for example, original article, case report, review article, clinical image). The cover letter should also include a statement declaring the absence or presence of a conflict of interest (please refer to *Conflict of Interest Statement* page for details). Furthermore, there should be a statement that the manuscript has not already been published, accepted or under simultaneous review for publication elsewhere. Balkan Medical Journal does not accept multiple submission and duplicate submission. Please refer to the editorial (Balkan Med J 2013;30:1-2) on this subject for more details. For manuscripts that have been presented orally or as a poster, this must be stated on the title page with the date and the place of the presentation. An example of a cover letter can be found on the journal's webpage.

Title Page

This should include:

- The complete manuscript title (no more than 150 characters)
- The running head (no more than 50 characters)
- Word counts for the abstract and text (the text word count does not include references, tables, and figure legends)
- The number of references, and the number of figures and tables
- All authors' full names, affiliations and e-mail addresses (all authors should meet the ICMJE's requirements for authorship – see details at "author contribution form")
- The name, address, telephone and fax numbers and email address of the corresponding author
- Keywords (3-6 key words from the list provided in Index Medicus under "Medical Subject Heading (MeSH)"
- Information about where and when the study has previously been presented.
- Acknowledgements: All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship (ICMJE: authorship and contributorship: http://www.icmje.org/ethical_1author.html) and the statement of conflict of interest and funding should be declared under this subheading.

Abstracts

Original articles, invited review articles and case reports should include an abstract. The abstract should be written in both English. A Turkish abstract is required with submissions from Turkey and the Turkish abstract should be submitted in a separate file through the submission system. For international submissions, a translation service for the abstract will be provided by the journal if the manuscript is accepted for publication, free of charge. Abstracts for original articles should be structured with the following subheadings: Background, Aims, Study design, Methods, Results, and Conclusion. Abstracts for case reports should be structured with the following subheadings: Background, Case Report, and Conclusion. Abstracts for review articles should not be structured. Clinical images, Editorials, Letters to the Editor, and Commentaries should not contain an abstract. Please find the guidelines for abstracts of specific types of manuscripts under the Main Text section below.

Main Document

The main document should include the main text, the reference list, tables, and figure legends, respectively.

Any information that may indicate an individual or institution should be excluded from the main document to ensure a blinded review process.

Please note, the abstract should be submitted through the submission system and should not be included in the main document. The formats of the abstract and the main text depend on the type of the submitted manuscript. The types of manuscripts are described in the Article Type section above.

References

Authors are encouraged to cite primary literature rather than review articles in order to give credit to those who have performed the original work. Reference listings must be in accordance with ICMJE standards and numbered consecutively at the end of the manuscript in the order in which they are mentioned in the text. While citing publications, preference should be given to the latest, most up to date publications. If an ahead of print publication is being cited the DOI number should be provided. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of references. Journal titles should be abbreviated in accordance with the journal abbreviations in Index Medicus/ Medline/PubMed (for journal abbreviations consult the List of Journals indexed for MEDLINE, published annually by NLM). When there are 6 or less authors, all authors should be listed. If there are 7 or more authors the first 6 authors should be listed followed by "et al". In the main text of the manuscript, references should be cited using Arabic numbers in parentheses. The reference styles for different types of publications are presented in the following examples:



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- Journal article: Korytina G, Kochetova O, Akhmadishina L, Viktorova E, Victorova T. Polymorphisms of cytochrome P450 genes in three ethnic groups from Russia. *Balkan Med J* 2012;29:252-60.
- Book: Tos M. Cartilage tympanoplasty. 1st ed. Stuttgart-New York: Georg Thieme Verlag; 2009.
- Book chapter: Tos M, Stangerup SE. The relationship between secretory otitis and cholesteatoma. In: Tos M, Thomsen J, Peitersen E, editors. Cholesteatoma and mastoid surgery. Amsterdam: Kugler & Ghedini; 1989:325-30.
- Abstract: Gurakar A, Elsaywi K, Akdogan M, Wright H, Nour, B, Sebastian T, et al. Asplenia and primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC): A mere coincidence? *Hepatology* 2002;36:673a (abstract).
- Article in electronic format: Morse SS. Factors in the emergence of infectious diseases. *Emerg Infect Dis* (serial online) 1995 Jan-Mar (cited 1996 June 5); 1(1): (24 screens). Available from: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2626828/pdf/8903148.pdf>
- For other reference style, please refer to "ICMJE Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Sample References"

Tables

Tables should be presented within the main document after the reference list. All tables should be referred to within the main text and they should be numbered consecutively in the order they are referred to within the main text. A descriptive title should be provided for all tables and the titles should be placed above the tables. Abbreviations used in the tables should be defined below the tables (even if they are defined within the main text). Tables should be created using the "insert table" command of the word processing software and they should be arranged clearly to provide an easy reading.

Figures and Figure Legends

Figures, graphics and photographs should be submitted as separate files (in TIFF or JPEG format) through the submission system. They should not be embedded in a Word document. When there are figure subunits, the subunits should not be merged to form a single image. Each subunit should be submitted separately through the submission system. Images should not be labelled (a, b, c, etc.) to indicate figure subunits. Thick and thin arrows, arrowheads, stars, asterisks and similar marks can be used on the images to support figure legends. Like the rest of the submission, the figures too should be blind. Any information within the images that may indicate an individual or institution should be blinded. The minimum resolution of each submitted figure should be 300DPI. To prevent delays in the evaluation process all submitted figures should be clear in resolution and large in size (minimum dimensions 100x100 mm)

Figure legends should be listed at the end of the main document. When there are figure subunits, the figure legends should be structured in the following format.

Example: **Figure 1. a-c.** Primary culture of choroid plexuses on day 2 after seeding of dissociated cells ($\times 400$). Nestin staining in green (a). GFAP staining in red (b). Nuclear labelling in blue and merged images (c)

Authorship Contributions Form

This is a statement of scientific contributions and responsibilities of all authors. The form is available for download at the journal's webpage.

The ICMJE recommends that authorship be based on the following 4 criteria:

- *"Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND*
- *Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND*
- *Final approval of the version to be published; AND*
- *Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved."*

A contributor should meet all four criteria to be identified as an author. If a contributor does not meet all four criteria he/she should be acknowledged in the acknowledgements section of the manuscript.

For more details please refer to the ICMJE's definition of the role of authors and contributors at <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT AND COPYRIGHT FORM

All contributing authors must sign the Copyright Transfer Agreement Form and submit it through the submission system during submission. Please see the Copyright Transfer Agreement Form for detailed information regarding "Acknowledgement of Authorship, Exclusive Publication Statement, Conflict of Interest Statement, and Transfer of Copyright Agreement".

Please refer to "conflict of interest policy" for more information.

CHECKLIST

To finalize submission, the corresponding author should ensure that all files mentioned below have been uploaded:

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 - the article title and type and the full name of the corresponding author
 - a brief statement describing the novelty and importance of the work



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- a statement declaring the absence or presence of a conflict of interest
- a statement that the manuscript has not been previously published or accepted for publication and is not submitted or under simultaneous review for publication elsewhere
- A title page including
 - Authors' affiliations and e-mail addresses, including the name of the corresponding author
 - A statement of the date and place of the meeting where the manuscript was presented orally or as a poster, if necessary
 - Acknowledgements
- Structured Abstract
- Structured Abstract in Turkish (for submissions from Turkey; separate file)
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- Conflict of Interest Statement Form

REVISIONS

When submitting a revised version of a paper, the author must submit a detailed "Response to reviewers" that states point by point how each issue raised by the reviewers has been covered and where it can be found (each reviewer's comment followed by the author's reply and line numbers where the changes have been made) as well as an annotated copy of the main document.

Revised manuscripts must be submitted within 45 days from the date of the decision letter. If the revised version of the manuscript is not submitted within the allocated time, the revision option will be automatically cancelled by the submission system. If the submitting author(s) believe that additional time is required, they should request this extension before the initial 45 day period is over.

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Any request to change the author list after submission, such as a change in the order of the authors or the deletion or addition of author names, is subject to the Editorial Board's approval. To obtain this approval, please find and complete the *change of authorship form* on the Journal's website and send it to the Journal's office. This form should include the following information:

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All withdrawal requests at any stage after submission are evaluated by the Editorial Board. The Balkan Medical Journal has the right not to accept a withdrawal request. The authors should explain their reason to withdraw the paper by a detailed letter. If the reason of withdrawal is not justified by the Editorial Board, the authors of the paper can be banned for up to 1 (one) year from submitting a new paper to the Journal.

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The Balkan Medical Journal is committed to the highest standards of research and publication ethics. If ethical misconduct is suspected, the Editorial Board will act in accordance with the relevant international rules of publication ethics (i.e., COPE guidelines, WAME resources, WMA policies and ORI).

An approval of research protocols by an ethics committee in accordance with international agreements ("WMA Declaration of Helsinki - Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, October 2013, Fortaleza, Brazil", "Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals, 8th edition, 2011" and/or "International Guiding Principles for Biomedical Research Involving Animals, 2012") is required for all experimental and clinical and drug trial studies. For articles concerning experimental research on humans, a statement should be included that shows informed consent of patients and volunteers was obtained following a detailed explanation of the procedures that they may undergo. Informed consent must also be obtained for case reports. All recognizable photographs of a patient must be accompanied by written permission from the patient for reproduction. Procedures that were performed to eliminate any pain, harm and distress in subjects/animals should clearly be stated. The authors should clearly state their compliance with internationally accepted guidelines and the guidelines issued by the relevant authority of their country. The journal requests a copy of the Ethics Committee Approval received from the relevant authority.

All authors should meet the ICMJE's authorship criteria outlined at the "authorship contribution form" section. Balkan Medical Journal does not accept gift, guest, or ghost authorship, and will act according to the COPE guidelines and flowcharts when faced with cases of suspected misconduct.

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Plagiarism is a serious problem and the most common ethical issue afflicting medical writing. The Balkan Medical Journal does not allow any form of plagiarism. In accordance with our



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journal policy, submitted manuscripts are screened with plagiarism software to detect instances of overlapping and similar text (iTentiate and others) at least two times (during the evaluation process and after acceptance).

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Appeal and complaint cases are handled within the scope of COPE guidelines by the Editorial Board of the journal. Appeals should be based on the scientific content of the manuscript. The final decision on the appeal and complaint is made by Editor in Chief. An Ombudsperson or the Ethical Editor is assigned to resolve cases that cannot be resolved internally. Authors should get in contact with the Editor in Chief regarding their appeals and complaints via e-mail at info@balkanmedicaljournal.org.

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Presubmission inquiries and rapid evaluation requests can be sent to the Balkan Medical Journal.

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quires the manuscript to be evaluated as quickly as possible. This requests are handled by the Editor in Chief of the journal should be sent to editor@balkanmedicaljournal.org and should include a shorter version of the cover letter explaining the importance of the manuscript accompanied by the title and the abstract of the manuscript.

Non-scientific reasons, such as academic career needs, will not be considered and may result immediate reject of a manuscript. Authors are not allowed to contact section editors for their manuscripts. This is an unacceptable behavior and may lead rejection of the manuscript and the author/s may be banned for further submissions to the journal. Any question related to the editorial process should be forwarded to the secretariat, managing editor or the editor-in-chief.

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INSTRUCTIONS TO REVIEWERS

v.1.2 (updated March 2014. Please check the Journal's website for the latest version)

The Balkan Medical Journal is a peer-reviewed open-access international journal that publishes interesting clinical and experimental research conducted in all fields of medicine, interesting case reports and clinical images, invited reviews, editorials, letters, comments and letters to the Editor including reports on publication and research ethics. The language of the journal is English. The journal is based on independent and unbiased double-blinded peer-reviewed principles. Only unpublished papers that are not under review for publication elsewhere can be submitted.

The primary aim of *the journal* is to publish original articles with high scientific and ethical quality and serve as a good example of medical publications in the Balkans. *The Balkan Medical Journal* believes that quality publication will lead to the progress of medical sciences and healthcare in Balkan countries as well as worldwide. *The Balkan Medical Journal* is indexed in CAB Abstracts, Chemical Abstracts, CINAHL, DOAJ, EBSCO, EMBASE, Global Health, Google Scholar, Index Copernicus, Journal Citation Reports, PubMed Central, Science Citation Index Expanded (Web of Science), Scopus and ULAKBIM Turkish Medical Database databases.

The Editorial Board of *the Balkan Medical Journal* and the Publisher adheres to the principles of the International Council of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), the Council of Science Editors (CSE), the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the US National Library of Medicine (NLM), the US Office of Research Integrity (ORI), the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), and the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE). The editor-in-chief has full authority over the editorial and scientific content of the Balkan Medical Journal and the timing of publication of the content.

All articles submitted for publication are strictly reviewed for their

- **originality,**
- **methodology,**
- **importance,**
- **quality,**
- **ethical nature and**
- **suitability for *the journal*.**

The Balkan Medical Journal uses a well-constructed scheme for the evaluation process. (Please refer to "Instructions to Author" page for more information).

Overall, the acceptance rate of the *Balkan Medical Journal* is between 10% and 15%, and the median response time for all submissions is 3 weeks (2 weeks for rejected papers, and for accepted papers, 5 weeks for the first revision request by the external reviewers). The median overall response time for accepted papers is 13 weeks because the editors and reviewers of the *Balkan Medical Journal* usually need to assist authors to improve their papers through several revisions to increase the quality of the articles published in *the journal*.

The entire submission process for a manuscript is completed online through the self-explanatory online submission system through the following website: <http://mc04.manuscriptcentral.com/balkanmedj>. The reviewers can also reach their personal pages from the same address with their own passwords.

Manuscripts that comply with the main rules of *the journal* are sent to at least two external reviewers, and the reviewers are asked for their opinion about the suitability of the paper for publication. The reviewed manuscripts are then re-reviewed by the Editor in Chief and the Editorial Board and a decision of rejection or acceptance is shaped.

If the reviewers have **any potential competing interests**, they must notify the editor before agreeing to review a submission.

The *Balkan Medical Journal* is committed to the highest standards of **research and publication ethics**. Editors will act in accordance with the relevant international rules of publication ethics (i.e., COPE guidelines, WAME resources, WMA policies and ORI) if any ethical misconduct is suspected. The Editorial Board of *the Balkan Medical Journal* encourages reviewers to comment on possible research or publication misconduct such as unethical research design, duplication, plagiarism, etc. Plagiarism is a serious problem and the most common ethical issue afflicting medical writing. *The Balkan Medical Journal* does not allow any form of plagiarism. In accordance with our journal policy, submitted manuscripts are screened with plagiarism software to detect instances of overlapping and similar text (iThenticate and others) at least two times (during the evaluation process and after acceptance). If the reviewers have any suspect, the editors can provide them information obtained by plagiarism screening tools.

An approval of research protocols by an ethics committee in accordance with international agreements ("WMA



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Declaration of Helsinki - Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (last updated: October 2013, Fortaleza, Brazil)", "Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals (8th edition, 2011)" and/or "International Guiding Principles for Biomedical Research Involving Animals (2012)" is required for all experimental and clinical and drug trial studies. For articles concerning experimental research on humans, a statement should be included that shows informed consent of patients and volunteers was obtained following a detailed explanation of the procedures that they may undergo. Informed consent must also be obtained for case reports. All recognizable photographs of a patient must be accompanied by written permission from the patient for reproduction. Procedures that were performed to eliminate any pain, harm and distress in subjects/animals should clearly be stated. The authors should clearly state their compliance with internationally accepted guidelines and the guidelines issued by the relevant authority of their country. *The journal* requests a copy of the Ethics Committee Approval received from the relevant authority.

The Balkan Medical Journal wants reviewers to treat the manuscripts in confidence. The material of the manuscripts must not be used or shared in any way until they have been published. *The Balkan Medical Journal* follows the COPE flowchart in cases of suspected reviewer misconduct. Please refer to COPE ethical guidelines for peer reviewers for "Basic principles to which peer reviewers should adhere" and "Expectations from reviewers".

The Balkan Medical Journal uses bibliographic databases and also accepts authors' suggestions to find new reviewers. *The journal* thanks to the reviewers and publishes the reviewer list every year in the last issue and on the web-

site after each issue. It is also being planned to award the reviewers on the basis of their performance.

If the reviewers need, they can go through the "Instructions to Authors". They can also use the questions below, when reviewing the manuscripts:

1. Please state any conflict(s) of interest that you have in relation to the review of this manuscript (state "none" if this is not applicable).
2. Do you suspect any research or publication misconduct? If yes, please indicate in detail.
3. Does the manuscript contain new and significant information to justify publication?
4. Is the title of the article appropriate?
5. Does the abstract clearly and accurately describe the content of the article?
6. Is the problem significant and concisely stated?
7. Are the methods described comprehensively?
8. Is the results section clear and satisfactory?
9. Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the results?
10. Is adequate and current reference made to other work in the field?
11. Is the language acceptable?
12. Please rate the priority for publishing this article (1 is the highest priority, 10 is the lowest priority).
13. Is the appropriate terminology used in the text?
14. Is it sufficient that figures and/or tables?
15. Is it necessary to shorten the article?



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