



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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EDITORIAL POLICY

AIMS AND SCOPE

The *Balkan Medical Journal* is a peer-reviewed open-access international journal that publishes clinical and experimental trials, interesting case reports, invited reviews, letters to the Editor including reports on publication and research ethics, meeting news and bulletin, clinical news and abstracts of interesting research conducted in all fields of medicine. The *journal* is the official scientific publication of the Trakya University Faculty of Medicine 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 Only unpublished papers that are not under review for publication elsewhere can be submitted.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.

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 *Balkan Medical Journal* is indexed in CAB Abstracts, Chemical Abstracts, CINAHL, DOAJ, EBSCO, EMBASE, Global Health, Index Copernicus, Journal Citation Reports, Science Citation Index Expanded (Web of Science) and Scopus databases. Printed copies of the *journal* are distributed to over 150 university libraries in 14 Balkan countries. 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 mainly to Balkan countries 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 at the *journal*'s webpage, the *Balkan Medical Journal* Editorial Board is also willing to organize educational programs in the subjects of medical writing and scientific ethics.

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.

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 14 successive steps:

1. Technical review by the editorial secretary
2. Review by the Editor-in-Chief: [reject or further evaluation]
3. Review by the Section Editor and/or Editorial Consultant



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4. Evaluation at the weekly Editorial Board Meeting [reject or further evaluation]
5. Review by two or more external reviewers
6. Review by a Biostatistician
7. Similarity check
8. Evaluation by the Section Editor
9. Evaluation at the weekly Editorial Board Meeting [reject or accept]
10. Copy editing
11. Similarity recheck
12. Galley proof preparation
13. Assignment of DOI number
14. Publication

The administration step of the online submission system's workflow can either be used for technical revision request (step 1) or rejection based on the decision of the Editorial Board (steps 2-4).

Technical reviews are typically processed one week after submission. From stage 2-5, the evaluation usually takes 1 to 3 weeks. From stage 5-10, 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 papers are published online as *Ahead of Print* as soon as DOI numbers are provided.

Very few manuscripts are rejected at the 2nd stage. About one-third of manuscripts are accepted for further evaluation at the 4th stage. The remaining manuscripts may be accepted at the 9th 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. All submitted manuscripts are screened with plagiarism software (iThenticate) to detect instances of overlapping and similar text at least two times during the evaluation process. The *Balkan Medical Journal* does not allow any form of plagiarism. The editors will act in accordance with the relevant international rules of publication and research ethics (COPE guidelines, WAME resources 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 ("Helsinki Declaration" and "Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals") 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 requests 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 "Instructions to Authors" and the "Instructions to Reviewers" pages.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

The *Balkan Medical Journal* requires that each member of the editorial board must disclose to the editor-in-chief any conflict of interest related to family, personal, financial, political or religious issues. If the associate editors believe that it is not appropriate to be an editor for a given manuscript, the editor should



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resign from the assignment. *The Balkan Medical Journal* editor review process is in accordance with the Good Editorial Practice set by international editorial organizations (i.e. WAME, COPE). *The Balkan Medical Journal* request that all members of the editorial board (editor-in-chief and associate editors) agree not to submit their own manuscripts to *the journal*, as it is considered a conflict of interest (since 2012).

Please refer to the "conflict of interest statement and copyright form" section at the "Instructions to Authors" page for the conflict of interest declaration for authors. For a conflict of interest statement for reviewers, please refer to the "Instructions to Reviewers" page.

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INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

v.2.1 (updated March 2013. Please check the Journal's website for the latest version)

MANUSCRIPT FORMATTING

Manuscript format must be in accordance with the *ICMJE Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication* available at <http://www.icmje.org>. 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.

General Format

The manuscript should be typed in a Microsoft Word™ file, single-column format, double-spaced with 2.5 cm margins on each side, and 11-point type in Times New Roman font. To facilitate the reviewing process, the lines of the text should be continuously numbered (at the left side).

All abbreviations in the text must be defined the first time they are used, 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 text.

Measurements should be reported using the metric system according to the International System of Units (SI). Consult the *SI Unit Conversion Guide*, New England Journal of Medicine Books, 1992. An extensive list of conversion factors can be found at http://www.unc.edu/~rowlett/units/scales/clinical_data.html. For more detail, see http://www.amamanualofstyle.com/oso/public/jama/si_conversion_table.html.

Article Type

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, an observational (cohort, case-control or cross-sectional) studies, diagnostic accuracy studies, systematic reviews and meta-analyses, nonrandomized behavioral and public health intervention trials, experimental animal trials, or any other retrospective or prospective clinical or experimental studies. Abstracts should not exceed 400 words and should be structured as follows: Background, Aims, Study Design, Methods, Results, and Conclusion. The main text should be structured as follows: Introduction, Material and Methods, Results, Discussion, Acknowledgments, References, Tables, and Figure Legends. The main text should not exceed 3000 words, excluding the abstract, references, 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 and will undergo peer review prior to acceptance. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses are accepted in this category. 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. The main text of case reports should be structured as follows: 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.
- **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). A letter can be signed by no more than 4 authors and can have no more than 5 references and 1 figure or table.
- **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. The main text of clinical images should be structured as Case, Discussion, and References.
- **Other:** Editorials, reviewer commentaries, and book reviews are requested by the Editorial Board.

Clinical Trials and Reporting Guidelines

The Balkan Medical Journal encourages the registration of 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>). The name of the registry and the registration number should be provided.

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 - SPIRIT (<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)



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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://www.balkanmedicaljournal.org>.

The manuscript should be prepared as SEPARATE files in the following order:

1. Cover Letter
2. Title Page
3. Abstract
4. Main Text (text, acknowledgments, references, tables, and figure legends)
5. Figures
6. Author Contribution Form

1. 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. Furthermore, there should be a statement that the manuscript has not already been published or accepted for publication and is not submitted or under simultaneous review for publication elsewhere. 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 here at the journal's webpage, www.balkanmedicaljournal.org

2. 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
- 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.

3. Abstract

Original articles, invited review articles and case reports should include an abstract. The abstract should be written in both English and Turkish. For the manuscripts outside of Turkey, Turkish translation will be provided by the journal. Abstracts for original articles should be structured as follows: Background, Aims, Study design, Methods, Results, and Conclusion. Abstracts for case reports should be structured as follows: 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.

4. Main Text

The main text should include all manuscript text except the abstract. It should also include references, tables, and figure legends in the following order.

- Text
- References
- Tables
- Figure legends

Author names and their institutional information should not be present in any part of the main text to ensure a blinded review process.

Please note, the abstract and the main text should be prepared and uploaded as separate files. 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 (http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html) standards and numbered consecutively at the end of the manuscript in the order in which they are mentioned in the text. Only published or articles accepted for publication, with preference given to the latest publications should be used. 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 at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/tsd/serials/lji.html>). For ≤ 6 authors, a list of all authors is required. For > 6 authors, list the first 6 authors 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:

- **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, Elsayeh 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).



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- 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.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/cid.htm>.
- For other reference style, please refer to "ICMJE Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Sample References" at http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html

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An approval of research protocols by an ethics committee in accordance with international agreements (Helsinki Declaration of 1964, last amended 2008-available at <http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/17c.pdf>, "Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals" - http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=5140) is required for all experimental and clinical and drug trial studies. For articles concerning experimental research on humans,



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INSTRUCTIONS TO REVIEWERS

v.1.1 (updated March 2013. Please check the Journal's website for the latest version)

The Balkan Medical Journal is a peer-reviewed open-access international journal that publishes clinical and experimental trials, interesting case reports, invited reviews, letters to the Editor including reports on publication and research ethics, meeting news and bulletin, clinical news and abstracts of interesting research conducted in all fields of medicine. 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, Index Copernicus, Journal Citation Reports, Science Citation Index Expanded (Web of Science) and Scopus 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,
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- importance,
- quality,
- ethical nature and
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Manuscripts that comply with the main rules of the journal are sent to at least two reviewers from the Advisory Board, 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 Editorial Board and a decision of rejection or acceptance is shaped.

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plagiarism software to detect instances of overlapping and similar text (iTthenticate 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 (Helsinki Declaration of 1964, last amended 2008, and "Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals") 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.

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