

Being a Q2 Journal

On June 28 2022, Clarivate released the 2022 update to the annual Journal Citation Reports (JCR)™. This year's JCR report demonstrated the profound effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on scientific publishing.¹ Moreover, this year's announcement heralded the fulfillment of a dream in the 44-year history of the Balkan Medical Journal. The Balkan Medical Journal became the second-quarter journal with an impact factor of 3.57. With this impact factor, it ranked 68th among 172 journals in the general medicine category worldwide. For the first time, a general medicine journal from Turkey appeared in the second quarter. We have shared the history of the journal with you a few years ago.^{2,3} Now, I would like to talk about the last 5 years of the journal from my point of view.

Figure 1 reflects the change in the impact factor and total citations over the last 5 years. The impact factor has increased approximately 4 times in 5 years, and the total number of citations has increased from 371 to 1,136.

Table 1 shows the change in the number of submissions and publications and the acceptance rate in the last 5 years. Apart from the abnormal increase due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the annual total number of submissions ranged from 1700 to 1900. However, the rate of submissions from outside Turkey increased from 17% to 25%. Our acceptance rates have gradually decreased over the years and have settled in the 3-4% range in the last 3

years. Similarly, the annual total number of publications has been gradually decreasing over the years and has been in the range of 80-90 in the last 3 years. Notably, the rate of publications outside Turkey increased from 18% to 42%.

I tried to list some important factors that brought us to this point (Table 2). Importantly, some editorial policies were activated and implemented promptly.⁴⁻⁸ However, I think we can do a better job on some of them.^{9,10}

Editorial independence and legal regulation: *Balkan Medical Journal* is a public university journal owned by the dean of the medical faculty. For such public journals, it is vital that the editorial board can work independently. The adoption and implementation of the legal regulation of the journal and the signing of an editorial independence agreement between the owner and the editor-in-chief has protected the journal from external influences and applied only scientific criteria.⁴

Weekly editorial meeting: We cannot ignore the contribution of weekly editorial meetings, which have become a tradition in the functioning of the journal. However, there is a fierce debate as to why an article should go to the reviewers or get a desk/editorial rejection. In addition, it is a platform where the articles brought to the meeting with the acceptance proposal are reviewed for the last time and the policies of the journal are determined.

TABLE 1. Submission and Publication Details Between 2016 and 2021

| Year | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Total no. of submission | 1,900 | 1,695 | 1,715 | 1,701 | 2,487 | 1,933 |
| Acceptance rate | 5.89% 112/1,900 | 6.07% 103/1,695 | 4.54% 78/1,715 | 3.70% 63/1,701 | 3.33% 83/2,487 | 3.28% 70/1,933 |
| Non-Turkey submission | 17.00% 323/1,900 | 22.94% 389/1,695 | 22.85% 392/1,715 | 24.86% 423/1,701 | 22.99% 572/2,487 | 24.46% 473/1,933 |
| Total no. of publication | 145 | 110 | 99 | 80 | 89 | 82 |
| Non-Turkey Publication* | 18.32% 24/131 | 25.47% 27/106 | 40.62% 39/96 | 37.83% 28/74 | 37.17% 29/78 | 41.89% 31/74 |

*Editorial excluded



Corresponding author: Zafer Koçak, Department of Radiation Oncology, Trakya University School of Medicine, Edirne, Turkey
e-mail: zaferkocak12@gmail.com

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Available at www.balkanmedicaljournal.org

ORCID iDs of the authors: Z.K. 0000-0003-1918-7795.

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TABLE 2. Some factors for being a Q2 journal

Editorial independence and legal regulation
 Weekly editorial meeting
 COVID-19 era editorial policy
 Selection of articles and manuscript evaluation process
 Adherence to ethical integrity and COPE/ICMJE guidelines

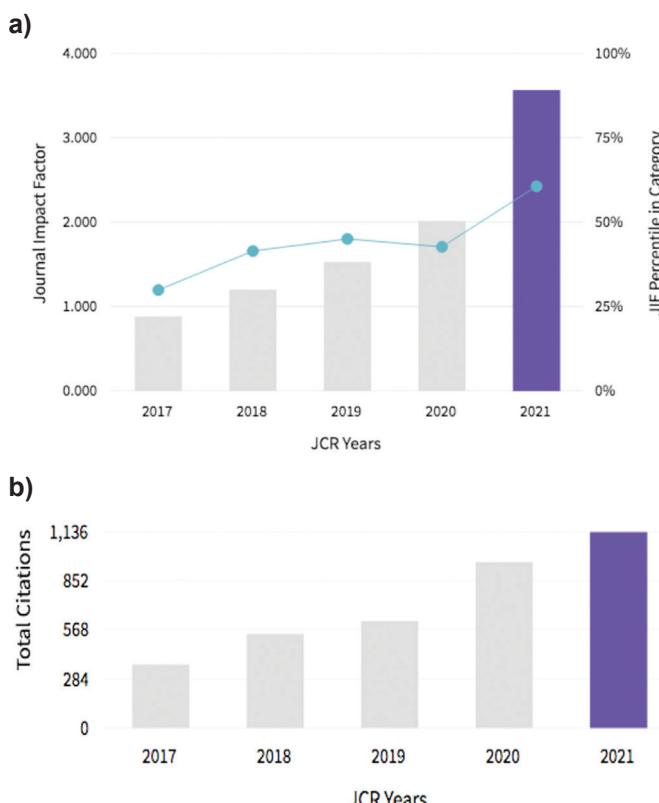


FIG. 1. Change in the impact factor (a) and total number of citations (b) of the journal by years in the last 5 years

COVID-19 era editorial policy: As demonstrated in the previous editorial,⁵ we have significantly reduced the time required to accept and reject articles about COVID-19 compared with the pre-pandemic era. How was this possible? The answer was that the editorial board made extra efforts to review and revise submitted papers to quickly bring reliable data about COVID-19 to the scientific community. I think it was one of the most important factors to our journal's listing in the second quarter.

Selection of articles and manuscript evaluation process: Rigorous manuscript selection by editors is one of the most important processes for general medicine journals. To give a rough

statistic for *Balkan Medical Journal*, 75-80% of the manuscripts submitted to the journal in the last 5 years have been rejected by the editor-in-chief, and the remaining 20%-25% are sent to relevant editors for detailed evaluation. Meticulousness in the selection and evaluation process of review and original research articles is important. The evaluation of each original research article by the statistics editor before acceptance also increased the quality of the articles.

Adherence to ethical integrity and COPE/ICMJE guidelines: *Balkan Medical Journal* is a member of COPE and follows the ICMJE recommendations and COPE guidelines since 2012. I think the persistent policy implemented by our journal contributes significantly to raising awareness about plagiarism in Turkey.⁷ The high similarity rate contributes to the rejection of some articles. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the article evaluation process is a kind of the training process on plagiarism for our authors. Ethical integrity and adherence to COPE/ICMJE guidelines may not directly increase the number of citations. Publishing in line with ethical principles is important to journal and article quality. Undoubtedly, such publishing applications serve as a platform for high-quality research papers by productive academics.

I would like thank our readers, authors, and the editorial board and publisher for their devoted work. We should all know that being a second-quarter journal increases our responsibility.

Zafer Koçak

Editor in Chief, Balkan Medical Journal Department of Radiation Oncology, Trakya University School of Medicine, Edirne, Turkey

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