



LETTER TO EDITOR

ARTICLE PROCESSING CHARGES - A CHALLENGE FOR RESEARCHERS IN NEPAL

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Dear editor

We read with great interest the article by Shrestha et al on attitude and perceived barriers toward research among medical professionals.¹ Scientific research and publications in Nepal has seen a huge increase during the last two decades. An article published in 2012 had mentioned over 25 medical journals published in Nepal.² Nepal Journals Online (NepJOL), an online portal currently has 56 listed medical and health journals.³ A bibliometric analysis published in 2010 mentioned that only 11% of the research conducted was published in Nepalese journals, two-thirds had Nepalese co-authors and 78% reported quantitative methods.⁴ For several years as a lower-income country, authors based in Nepal were waived article processing charges (APC) by most journals.

In July 2020, the World Bank reclassified Nepal as a lower middle-income country (LMIC) as the official per-capita income was US dollars (USD) 1090, above the threshold of USD 1030

for lower income status.⁵ The increase in per-capita income was very modest. One effect of this promotion was many journals and publishers now require authors from Nepal to pay 50% of the APC. Many international journals charge around USD 2500 to 3000 as APC, requiring a payment of about USD 1500 (Nepalese rupees 180000) by Nepalese researchers. Most funding agencies in Nepal provide one or two hundred thousand rupees as research funding subject to a 15% income tax deduction. There is also payment for ethical approval by the Nepal Health Research Council. So, the amount provided will not cover the APC. There are also other research expenses. This is a major challenge now facing researchers in Nepal. An option could be publishing in local journals within Nepal, where thankfully the global move toward APC is still uncommon. Paying even a discounted APC to publish in international journals will be an increasing problem for researchers based in Nepal.

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