



HMPG in 2016

The year 2016 has seen some major changes to the Health and Medical Publishing Group (HMPG) in general, and to the *SAMJ* in particular. From a practical perspective, one of the biggest changes has been to our online submission system for journals, which has moved from the open-source OJS (open journal system) to Editorial Manager/ Production Manager, an international system used by large international publishers including *The Lancet* and Elsevier. Over the past 6 months or so, the editorial team, led by managing editors Ingrid Nye and Claudia Naidu, has invested a huge amount of time and effort in the development of guidelines, support materials and helpdesk structures to ensure that they will be able to guide users through the transition from the old OJS sites to the new system. Another significant change is that the *SAMJ* is now an online journal. The indexed issue is online only. The print edition is a 'highlights' package that is distributed to members of the South

African Medical Association and is shorter than the actual journal issue. This allows us a much wider readership, and also allows us to publish more per issue without the cost constraints associated with print.

In addition to this, we are in the process of building a corporate website that will include a payment mechanism for *SAMF* sales, a newsletter programme, and professional and classified advertising functionality. This will also become the online publishing platform for all our journals.

Editorial efficiency improvements

The investments made in strengthening the pre-publication and peer review processes within HMPG have already resulted in demonstrable improvements in the service we provide for authors. In 2015, articles were taking an average of over 6 months to be published, with some taking more than a year. However, the editorial team is

now both faster at making decisions and more consistent, meaning that the majority of authors who submit to HMPG can now expect their articles to be published within 4 months (Table 1). We have also eliminated the backlog of accepted articles that were waiting to be published. Some of these articles had been waiting for more than a year before being allocated space in the journal. These improvements have generated a very positive response from our authors and reviewers.

A new editorial team structure is in the process of being introduced, with a board of Associate Editors being recruited for the main specialties covered by the *SAMJ*. I am now the substantive editor of the *SAMJ*, in charge of the in-house editorial team that functions as the secretariat and operational support to the team of academic Associate Editors, which will be chaired by an Editor-in-Chief.

HMPG recently moved into new offices in Pinelands to accommodate the expanded staff, which includes two design and layout staff, an expanded sales team and an additional junior copy editor. The whole HMPG team is excited about these new developments, which put us in a better position to respond to the needs of authors, reviewers and readers. We are looking forward to 2017 and to attracting the best research across the country in all medical disciplines.

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Table 1. Comparison of editorial processing times for the three main article types, 2015 - 2016

	2015	2016	% improvement
Submission to publication (average months)			
Correspondence	4.7	3.3	30.1
In Practice	6.1	4.2	30.3
Research	7.1	6.2	12.8
Range (the difference between the minimum and maximum number of months)			
Correspondence	12	2	83
In Practice	12	7	42
Research	14	7	50