

# Open Access Fees in Top Physiology Journals: How Indian Researchers May Miss the Opportunity of Publication in Top Journals

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Sir,

In recent years, Open Access (OA) publishing has gained popularity as an alternative to traditional subscription-based models. It allows readers free access to scientific articles.<sup>[1]</sup> For a better understanding of the current publishing model, we enlisted the current publishing model in Table 1.<sup>[2]</sup>

OA publication offers numerous advantages that enhance the dissemination and impact of scientific research. By making articles freely accessible to anyone with an internet connection, OA breaks down financial and institutional barriers that traditionally limit access to scholarly work.<sup>[3]</sup> Readers from developing countries can access the articles freely. For authors, OA increases visibility and readership, which can lead to more citations and a greater overall impact on their work.<sup>[4]</sup> Additionally, open access has the potential to ensure that research from all parts of the world is available to the scientific community and beyond. However, OA publication often comes with Article Processing Charges (APC).

We reviewed the type of publishing model and APC of the top 20 physiology journals according to h5-index (“h5-index is the h-index for articles published in the last 5 complete years. It is the largest number h such that h articles published in 2019-2023 have at least h citations each”) in Google Scholar ([https://scholar.google.com/citations?view\\_op=top\\_venues&hl=en&vq=med\\_physiology](https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=top_venues&hl=en&vq=med_physiology)). Among the 20 journals, three were fully OA, six were hybrid and ten were Subscribed to Open (S2O). The average OA charge was 3620.58±904.6 USD which equals to 304553.05±76092.42 INR. In addition, the S2O model charges a flat fee of 975 USD (it applies to the ten journals among the top 20 journals), which equals 82,015.78 INR. In this publication model, authors need to pay that 975 USD for all types of publication models and then, if they want OA, they need to pay APC. Many of

Indian academicians in the early career stage earn approximately 975 USD as their monthly salary!

Hence, this model brings a substantial financial burden, particularly for researchers in countries like India. The high cost of APCs required to publish in top-ranked physiology journals may potentially create significant barriers inhibiting their ability to contribute to the global scientific discourse.

Many researchers may wonder why Indian researchers do not receive a waiver, especially when the salaries of Indian academicians and researchers are very low, and funding opportunities are limited. According to the World Bank ranking of countries, India does not get a waiver of APC. The list of countries that get partial (50%) and full waiver of APC can be accessed from the Research4life website (<https://www.research4life.org/access/eligibility/#groupb>) where category A gets a full waiver and category B gets a 50% discount. This creates a challenging situation for Indian researchers. Although India's economy has grown, many academic institutions still operate with limited budgets and research funding is often insufficient to cover the high costs of publishing in open-access journals.<sup>[5]</sup> In addition, many funding agencies do not allow APC to be part of the research proposal.

As a potential solution, a sliding scale for waivers and discounts based on institutional resources, rather than a blanket classification based on country GDP, could help alleviate financial strain on Indian researchers. Indian universities and research institutions could play a more active role by creating dedicated funds to cover APCs for their researchers. Government bodies could establish grant programs specifically to help cover APCs, similar to funding models in developed countries. Additionally, revising existing grant guidelines to allow for the inclusion of



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**Table 1: Current publishing models and its brief with fees paid by author and reader.**

Model	Description	Cost to author	Cost to reader
Subscription-based	Readers or institutions pay for access to articles, typically through a subscription to the journal or database.	Usually no or low fees	Paid subscriptions or pay-per-article fees
Open Access (OA)	Articles are freely accessible to everyone immediately upon publication, with authors or their institutions covering the publication costs.	Article Processing Charges (APCs)	Free
Hybrid	A mix of subscription-based and open access. Authors can choose to make their article open access by paying an APC, while others remain behind a paywall.	Optional APC for open access	Subscription or pay-per-article for closed content
Delayed open access	Articles are initially subscription-based, but after a certain period (e.g., 6-12 months), they are made open access.	Low or no fees	Paid subscriptions or pay-per-article fees; Free after embargo period
Diamond/Platinum OA	Journals that are open access but do not charge authors or readers. Costs are usually covered by institutions or grants.	No fees	Free
Self-archiving (Green OA)	Authors publish in subscription-based journals but can deposit a version of the article in an institutional or subject repository for free access.	No direct fees from authors	Free through repositories
Subscribe to Open (S2O)	Authors pay a flat fee upon acceptance of their manuscript. If they want to publish OA, an APC is needed.	Flat fee for accepted manuscripts	Paid subscriptions; Free if published OA

APCs in research proposals would ease this burden on individual researchers.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## ABBREVIATIONS

**OA:** Open Access; **APC:** Article Processing Charges; **S2O:** Subscribe to Open; **h5-index:** H-Index for articles published in the last 5 complete years; **USD:** United States Dollar; **INR:** Indian Rupee.

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