

# A call for universal access to science: how the Swiss Medical Weekly aims to contribute

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Scientific progress and high-quality patient care rely on transparent, accessible, and collaborative research. At Swiss Medical Weekly (SMW), our longstanding commitment to open access and open knowledge is not only a tradition but also a forward-looking choice to promote medical science. Open science enriches research by providing a platform for data sharing, collaboration, and continuous innovation – all essential for addressing complex health challenges.

Founded in 1871, SMW has a rich history of contributions that have shaped clinical practice and research [1]. Groundbreaking studies published in SMW have expanded the understanding of various medical challenges and sparked innovations that continue to influence healthcare practices worldwide. This legacy serves as a guiding principle for the future. In an increasingly interconnected world, the free exchange of scientific knowledge accelerates healthcare progress, supports the development of innovative therapies, and aids the education and training of future medical professionals.

Open science is defined by principles ensuring that research findings are accessible to all. As stated by UNESCO, open science “*has the potential of making the scientific process more transparent, inclusive and democratic. It is increasingly recognized as a critical accelerator for the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and a true game changer in bridging the science, technology and innovation gaps and fulfilling the human right to science*” [2]. This approach enables researchers from diverse backgrounds and regions to contribute to and benefit from shared scientific knowledge. In medicine, where the rapid dissemination of new findings can directly impact patient care and public health, open access is especially crucial.

SMW was among the first journals to adopt the principles of Diamond Open Access – well before the Berlin Declaration on Open Access [3]. Thus, neither authors nor readers face financial barriers. Our commitment to free access ensures SMW’s articles are available to a global audience, fostering a culture of collaboration across national borders. This model democratizes knowledge and aligns with our publication’s core values, serving the medical communi-

ty and the public by providing unrestricted access to high-quality research. UNESCO has stated that “*Diamond Open Access embodies the principles of the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, particularly openness, inclusivity, and collaboration. This model strengthens equitable access to knowledge, promotes multilingualism, and democratizes science, supporting UNESCO’s broader mission to close knowledge and technology gaps globally*” [4].

Recent discussions in prestigious journals, such as the New England Journal of Medicine, the Lancet, Nature, and Science, have raised concerns about trends that could hinder the free exchange of scientific knowledge [5–9]. While these discussions address various challenges within the broader scientific ecosystem, they collectively emphasize that the unrestricted sharing of data and ideas is essential for evidence-based decision-making and healthcare innovations. Open knowledge sharing, especially through open access to scientific and academic journals, is crucial for promoting global equity. Open access enables researchers, students, and communities in all regions, including those with limited resources, to access information vital to their work and progress. It helps ensure a more equitable spread of knowledge without financial or geographical barriers hindering innovation and research.

For us, supporting open science means maintaining the integrity and continuity of research regardless of external pressures. It concerns ensuring that valuable insights are not lost due to politics or changes in funding. These editorial reflections remind us that openness and transparency are key to progress, even as the landscape of science funding and management evolves.

Transparency is the foundation of trust in scientific research. Open scientific practices ensure that research is conducted and communicated with integrity. Such practices are particularly important in medicine, where rigorous validation of evidence is critical for patient safety and effective treatments. SMW has a particular focus on transparent and comprehensive scientific reporting, ensuring that every submission undergoes an editorial pre-assessment and thorough methodological review.

Inclusivity, another core value of open science, eliminates global research barriers. By providing unrestricted access to research findings, SMW helps scientists from diverse

regions and backgrounds engage in global dialogue about health and medicine.

Moreover, open access fosters cross-disciplinary and cross-border collaboration. In times when complex health challenges – such as emerging infectious diseases, chronic conditions, or global issues such as obesity – require coordinated global responses, open science provides a platform for rapid and effective collaboration. It enables researchers to build on each other's work, share critical data, and accelerate the translation of research into clinical practice.

At SMW, our commitment to open access is more than a publication model – it is a commitment to advancing medicine. By ensuring that high-quality research is freely accessible, we help preserve the collaborative spirit of science. Open access not only accelerates innovation but also improves the reproducibility and repeatability of research findings – cornerstones of trust in medical science.

In an era when the broader research community is managing changes in funding and management policies, SMW's ongoing support for open science could be a stabilizing force. The journal is published by the SMW supporting association, a non-profit organization that guarantees neither financial barriers nor external pressures interfere with editorial independence. This model upholds the highest standards of academic freedom and scientific integrity and is financed by the members of the association [10]. The evolution of global research has clarified that open science is essential for achieving optimal outcomes in medicine and public health. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has recently reaffirmed its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility, emphasizing that restrictions on terminology, research activities, and international collaborations contradict the principles of the COPE and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) [11, 12].

SMW has long been a pioneer in the open science movement, and we will continue to support a vibrant and dynamic medical research community. It is our collective

responsibility as editors, researchers, and clinicians to uphold the principles that make science a self-correcting and progressive force. By defending and promoting open science, SMW honours its history and lays a foundation for a future in which medical research is a shared, accessible, and transformative resource for all – free from censorship, ideological restrictions, and limitations regarding specific terms and topics.

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