

## Time to Hand Over the Flag to Shape the Future



I was appointed as the Editor-in-Chief of the Balkan Medical Journal on September 27, 2016, which has been one of the greatest honors of my professional life. Before taking on this important task, I was a member of the editorial board for seven years. After six challenging years, I realized the time had come to hand over the flag to shape the Journal's future. With this editorial, I would like to share the short story of these six years with you.

Just a few days after this appointment, for the first time in the history of the Journal, an editorial independence agreement was signed between the Editor and the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine.<sup>1</sup> However, within two months, we had to change the publisher. In those challenging days, the news increased our motivation; the Journal was accepted into the PubMed/MedLine index. This news was the best we have had in the last three months. The restructuring of the editorial board, the addition of new kinds of articles (short reports and special section articles), and the new cover of the Journal were the first innovations of the new era. On the other hand, we had to deal with the rapid increase in submissions.<sup>1</sup>

In the middle of 2017, after our hard work, we were excited to announce the new and improved Balkan Medical Journal website officially. I am truly grateful to Professor Karadağ for his efforts in designing the new website. At about the same time, Clarivate Analytics announced the Balkan Medical Journal's 2016 impact factor of 1,083. With this development, the Journal became the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Journal for the first time in its history.<sup>2</sup> This success made us feel that our efforts were rewarded.

In 2018, we were busy with the Journal's editorial policies and legal regulations. Before my assignment, we had successfully implemented ICMJE recommendations, such as ethical approval requirements, conflicts of interest and financial statements, authorship, and clinical trial registration requirements. However, we had no specific policy regarding sex and gender reporting. After

difficult editorial meeting discussions, we finally decided to adopt the sex and gender policy and follow the SAGER guidelines.<sup>3</sup> I must admit that I am sorry for the unsatisfactory implementation of this policy during my tenure. At the end of 2018, we started using the new online manuscript system to reduce the Journal's cost.

Data sharing was another new publication policy we implemented to increase openness and transparency. As of January 2019, we started requesting data-sharing statements from authors for original articles.<sup>4</sup> In addition to our publisher, I would like to thank Professor Çalyurt for his contribution to implementing this policy.

In 2019, we managed to bring the legal regulation of the Journal to life. Why did we need to do this as a university Journal? As stated in the editorial,<sup>5</sup> we hoped that effective communication within the rules between the owner, editor-in-chief, editorial board, publisher, and authors would prevent chaotic and destructive conflicts that could damage their reputation. Also, we thought that writing such rules encourages the editor's scientific autonomy and prevents abuse of editorial freedom, thereby ensuring the continued success of a journal. I would like to thank Professor İnan and Professor Erbaş İnan and Professor Erbaş for their time and effort spent preparing the legal regulations of the journal.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted the rapid publication of many academic articles on the novel coronavirus. Due to the pandemic, scientists and editors have felt tremendous pressure to share their findings quickly. As a result of our editorial policy, compared with pre-pandemic, we have reduced the time required to accept and reject articles about COVID-19. How was this possible? The answer was that the editorial board made extra efforts to review and revise submitted papers quickly to bring reliable data about COVID-19 to the scientific community.<sup>6</sup> The effort of the editorial board members during the COVID-19 period was admirable. Another challenge of the COVID-19 era was the explosion of preprint publications, forcing journals to create or change their preprint policies. Due to the submission of preprints in 2021, we have added a preprint policy to our editorial policy and author guidelines.<sup>7</sup>

One of the missions of the Journal is to train the actors participating in this publishing process as in any educational task.<sup>8</sup> For this purpose, we have been regularly organizing courses and meetings since the term of Professor Uzun. I want to thank Professor İnan,



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who contributed to the realization of these courses and meetings. We also publish some articles, especially on publication ethics, to inform and train readers and young academics.<sup>9-11</sup>

On June 28, 2022, The Clarivate announced the journals' 2021 impact factors. This news heralded the fulfillment of a dream in the Journal's 44-year history. The Balkan Medical Journal was listed in the second quarter with an impact factor of 3.57. A general medical Journal from Turkey appeared in the second quarter for the first time and became one of the greatest stories in the history of Turkish Medical Publishing. In the editorial published couple months ago, you can learn more about the story of becoming a Q2 Journal.<sup>12</sup>

Being the Editor of the Balkan Medical Journal was rewarding and enlightening. Publishing a Journal is teamwork, and having a dedicated team is the key to success. For this reason, I want to express my gratitude to all editors, referees, and publishers for their devoted work. I would also like to thank our Dean and Rectors for their unwavering support. It was an honor to take over the flag from Prof Uzun, and now I hand it to Prof Altay with great joy and hope. Prof Altay is a great researcher, leader, organizer, and visionary, and I do not doubt that he will further bolster the reputation of the Journal.

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