

Welcome to *MWJ*: the MalariaWorld Journal

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Never before in history has the field of malaria research and control experienced the momentum it has today. This is clearly reflected in the improved malaria situation seen in many countries [1], of which several (and hopefully many more) will reach the Millennium Development Goals related to malaria by 2015. Recent estimates have shown that over the last decade some 750 thousand lives were saved as a result of scaling up available interventions like insecticide-treated bednets, indoor residual spraying, and intermittent preventive treatment [2]. This commendable figure fuels the optimism and belief that with a continued global and concerted effort, the malaria burden can be reduced even further, and that certainly its death toll can be minimised.

Since three years the global malaria research community is openly talking about 'elimination' and even 'eradication' [3], as if these words never disappeared after the first global effort to eradicate malaria in the 1950s and 1960s. But before malaria reaches the phase in which polio or Guinea worm eradication programmes are at present, and eventually follows in the footsteps of the eradication success against smallpox, much more is needed. Time estimates are in decades rather than years.

Research, the output of which needs to be disseminated widely and without access restrictions, plays a crucial role in providing additional weapons against the parasite and its vector, but also to monitor progress and deliver the data that form the backbone for policy making. With increased funding levels for malaria research, also the number of research publications in the field of malaria has increased dramatically since the late 1990s.

MalariaWorld [4] has, over the past few years, listed an average of nearly three thousand articles per annum, and the number is still growing. Every day some 7-9 articles with a focus on malaria are published in the myriad of professional scientific journals available at present. We have succeeded in listing the vast majority of these publications on the MalariaWorld platform and are now providing the global malaria community with a weekly email newsletter with all these titles. A survey amongst subscribers has indicated that on average, per person, some 4.6 hours of

searching for titles are saved every week. Rather than all of us searching for information we do this with a small team, thereby generating a huge return on investment.

Justifying a new journal with a focus on malaria

With hundreds of journals that publish articles on malaria it seems, a priori, not justified to launch another journal with a focus on malaria. We nevertheless, based on consultation with many of the MalariaWorld users, have defined a number of compelling reasons to proceed with the launch of the *MWJ* (the abbreviation of MalariaWorld Journal, by which we hope the journal will become known):

- On average, half the articles published in the field of malaria are open access and can be read for free by anyone interested. However, this also means that for the other half access remains (partially or fully) restricted. *MWJ* is a full open access journal without access restrictions.
- Most open access journals require the author(s) to pay a publication fee. Although waivers exist for developing country scientists (to a certain extent) these fees could be used better for research. *MWJ* does not charge publication costs - publishing is free for authors.
- MalariaWorld, being the first online scientific and social platform for malaria professionals, is the first to integrate a scientific journal, *MWJ*, with the ability to discuss the research in discussion forums, and provides both authors and readers with the option to write about their work through weblogs or submit comments. Publication in *MWJ* is not an endpoint for your work - it is the starting point for interaction and debate with thousands of other malaria professionals.
- As of October 2010, MalariaWorld has more than 6000 subscribers in 105 countries. On a weekly basis we

have more than 2200 unique visitors on the platform, a number that is growing rapidly. This ensures that publications in *MWJ* will be exposed to the global malaria community almost instantly. Publishing in *MWJ* means instant and wide exposure of your research findings to the global malaria community.

- Although we appreciate the importance of impact factors and citation indices, these figures mean very little in terms of malaria control in the real world. We have therefore decided to add a unique indicator: the relevance factor (see below). *MWJ* values the contribution of research articles to solving the malaria problem. We consider relevance and appropriation of knowledge more important than impact factors or citation indices.

Scope

Although *MWJ* will accept all manuscripts with a focus on malaria in the broadest sense, we prefer to publish articles with a 'downstream' focus and/or a field component. At present, the vast majority of research on malaria takes place in laboratory settings, of which, regrettably, very few results will eventually contribute to the way we tackle malaria. Publishing the outcome of field research, or at least research in the laboratory with a clear focus on valorisation, has our preference. The first article in *MWJ*, by Hassan *et al.* [5], provides a perfect example of this.

Beyond original research articles we invite other types of articles like opinion papers and reviews. We hope that *MWJ* will become known as a journal, which publishes findings that are of immediate relevance to the way malaria is controlled. We have therefore come up with the 'relevance index'. Once an article is published, readers can rank it on a scale from 1-10, to indicate how important they view this contribution in terms of solving key problems in the way we control malaria. Once a given number (≈ 50) of unique readers have scored a paper, the relevance index will be added to the article and be visible from then onwards.

How we run *MWJ*

Unlike most scientific journals, we have no publisher behind *MWJ*. Considering that, like any other professional journal, the Editor-in-Chief and editors take care of all the work, and the fact that online publishing can be done on a shoestring these days, there is simply no need for a publisher. The costs involved in publishing *MWJ* are minimal and we aim to cover these through small grants we apply for. Regardless, authors will publish for free, and readers will have access for free.

MWJ is a peer-reviewed journal. We will not have an editorial board but seek appropriate experts, depending on the

topic, to review manuscripts. We will encourage reviewers to publish their review reports online, another feature not regularly encountered in current journals with a focus on parasitic diseases.

We look forward to receiving your manuscripts. Please consult the guidelines for authors [6] before sending us your work to ensure that we can proceed swiftly with the review process.

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