



Editorial

The *Indian Journal of Plastic Surgery* in Its 57th Year of Publication: Oldest and Credible Free Open Access Journal in Plastic Surgery with an Impact Factor

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The rise of open-access (OA) journals has brought about a significant shift in the publishing model over the past two decades. This change has been driven by two key developments. Firstly, public funded groups, such as the National Institutes of Health, The Wellcome Trust (U.K.), and Research Councils UK (RCUK), now require open access publication of research they fund.¹ Secondly, the Creative Commons License (CC-BY) and Attribution-Noncommercial No Derivative (CC-BY-NC-ND) provide authors with copyrights, a privilege that was previously held by publishers or societies under the subscription model.

To accommodate the new mandatory OA articles, traditional subscription-based journals with paywalls for access have turned into hybrid modes.² In this model, authors have the option to pay for their articles to be made OA in traditional journals. Additionally, well-established journals have launched sister OA journals that require all authors to pay article processing charges (APCs) for publication, regardless of their funding. The burden of this model has impacted a large section of authors who need a source of funding or institutional support to publish in paid journals. In this context, the *Indian Journal of Plastic Surgery (IJPS)* remains the best and possibly the only credible choice for authors to publish in plastic surgery journals without having to pay.

Funding Models of OA Publications

The OA model offers free access, a significant advantage for readers, authors, and the journal. With the free flow of knowledge, articles are read and cited more frequently. The cost of providing “free access” is usually passed on to the author in terms of APCs. Authors from low- and middle-income countries are often unable to pay the APCs for most OA journals, which are usually exorbitant and unreasonable.

Green, gold, and diamond OA journals are categorized predominantly on their revenue model. Articles in the green OA can be found through the institution repository, often in a preprint version or following a specific embargo period after publication. The gold OA publication requires authors or funding agencies to pay APCs. No fee charged to either the author or the reader in the diamond or platinum OA model. The affiliated societies generally fund the latter model, which remains a nonprofit venture for the publisher and society.

Credibility of Open Access Journals

The credibility of OA journals was eroded by the rapid proliferation of predatory journals that charged high fees for publication. In 2003, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) provided guidelines for OA journals, and DOAJ-indexed journals adhere to quality, oversight, and sustainability criteria. OA journals gained credibility among researchers, funding agencies, and institutions following DOAJ, Scopus, and PubMed indexing. Thus, paying for publishing an article became an acceptable practice with the advantage of free access reaching a wide readership.

Copyright Issues

Copyrights in OA journals are granted to authors under the Creative Commons License (CC-BY) and Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivatives (CC-BY-NC-ND). Gold OA models typically involve authors paying an APC, obtaining full copyright, and publishing their articles with free access. However, well-established, indexed diamond OA journals affiliated with and funded by the associations for official publication have copyrights owned by the association. Although DOAJ insists in favor of authors, granting full copyright (CC-BY) may not be acceptable for diamond OA journals when

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authors are not charged publication fees. Societies could be compelled to switch to paid publication models if their control over copyrights is not respected. This conflict further diminishes the option of free publication, which significantly impacts the authors.

Each journal has a different APC criteria depending on its reputation, impact factor, society membership, country affiliations, income groups of countries, etc. However, the APCs currently are on higher to exorbitantly unaffordable levels. Authors are charged over \$2,000 for a full-length article, some even charging close to \$4,000 in plastic surgery OA journals (► **Table 1**). However, the cost for each article is estimated to be under \$900 per submission.³ Such a high cost for publication has now become an industry standard, an almost unaffordable out-of-pocket expense for most individual authors.

Rise of Sister Open Access Journal with Identical Titles

Over the past decade, several established journals and official publications of scholarly societies have begun adopting new publication models. Sister open-access journals have been launched, preserving the original titles of subscription journals. This additional OA journal adds several advantages to the established journal, such as an identical title, single portal submission, retention of authors' base, and utilization of an existing pool of reviewers, editorial team, publisher, and promotions. Many journals and publishers have found this business model successful and profitable.

Authors often can choose the OA model during article submission if their article is rejected without having to resubmit the article file. Authors may find this "transfer-out" option of the manuscript attractive if they can afford it. After paying APC, several lower-level evidence articles will likely be accepted in the peer-reviewed OA sister journal. The identical title's appeal attracts authors who get the chance to publish in a reputable name, albeit in secondary titles on payment. I have encountered many professionals confused about the distinction between similar titles of traditional and OA journals, often erroneously assigning higher credentials to the OA journal. The emergence of sister open-access journals based on the APC revenue, has raised concerns about the quality of the peer review process and lowered standards for accepting articles. A study on plastic surgery journals comparing traditional versus OA model sister journals concludes that "Methodological quality scores were higher among traditional access journals and Higher degrees of peer review may be necessary to ensure appropriate methodological quality in OA plastic surgery publications."⁴

The *IJPS*: A Rare Diamond Open Access Model among Plastic Surgery Titles

Authors do not pay for articles in the *IJPS*, which is published in a diamond OA model and provides free access to readers. The primary objective is to disseminate scientific knowledge

Table 1 Plastic surgery journals with open access

Journal title	Sister publication of:	Society/region	Publication type	Year	Open access: APC	Frequency	Impact factor
<i>Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery: PRS Global Open (PRS-GO)</i> ⁵	Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (PRS)	American Society	Open access	2013	\$489–2,495	12	1.5
<i>Journal of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery (JPRAS Open)</i> ⁶	Journal of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery (JPRAS)	British and European society	Open access		€650–1,750	4	1.5
<i>European Journal of Plastic Surgery</i> ⁷	–	Europe	Hybrid	1973	\$3,690		0.6
<i>Plastic Surgery</i> ⁸	–	Canadian	Hybrid	1993	\$3,900	4	0.7
<i>Archives of Plastic Surgery</i> ⁹	–	Korean Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons	Open access	1974	\$300–700	6	1.3
<i>The Journal of Hand Surgery Global Online (JHS GO)</i> ¹⁰	The Journal of Hand Surgery	American Society for Surgery of the Hand	Open access	2019	\$1,250–2,500	6	–
<i>Journal of Reconstructive Microsurgery Open (JRMO)</i> ¹¹	Journal of Reconstructive Microsurgery		Open access	2016	\$3,050	2	–
<i>Aesthetic Surgery Journal Open Forum</i> ¹²	Aesthetic Surgery Journal		Open access	2019	\$1,400–2,900		–
<i>Indian Journal of Plastic Surgery</i>	–	Association of Plastic Surgeons of India	Open access	1968	None	6	0.8

Note: This list does not include all plastic surgery titles.

without a paywall barrier and assist authors in publishing high-quality content without putting a strain on their finances. As an official publication of the Association of Plastic Surgeons of India (APSI), from its first issue in 1968 to now, the journal has made all its archives available. With a double-blind peer review process and unbiased decisions, the journal has credible quality metrics indexing in DOAJ, Scopus, and PubMed. The credibility and reputation of *IJPS* have been enhanced thanks to the much-deserved first impact factor received last year. However, due to the publication of a high number of archived articles from the last 50 years, the impact factor is likely to be affected for a couple of years.

The journal is on a fast track to growth, receiving a wider readership and authorship globally. Thanks to the members of the APSI for their unflinching support and contributions. Nevertheless, we still need more quality submissions with evidence-based research, peer reviewers, more citations, and support in subscriptions from institutions. For more than fifty years, the *IJPS* has been an exceptional open-access journal that has stood strong and upheld ethical publishing and scientific values. It remains the oldest and most credible open-access journal in plastic surgery today. Before considering publishing in other “reputed titles” of paid OA journals, I urge our members to assess the journal’s basic credentials and metrics alongside the *IJPS*.

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Conflict of Interest

None declared.

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