ISEE2026
MUNICH, GERMANY
AUG 30 – SEPT 2, 2026
Lunch Seminar – Sept 2 – 12-13h

Do Scientists lose Control over Scientific Publishing?

Wake up - make a difference!

Nino Künzli, MD PhD, Environmental Epidemiologist

Prof. em. Swiss TPH and University of Basel, former Dean Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+) (2015-2023)

My disclaimers & background for this lecture

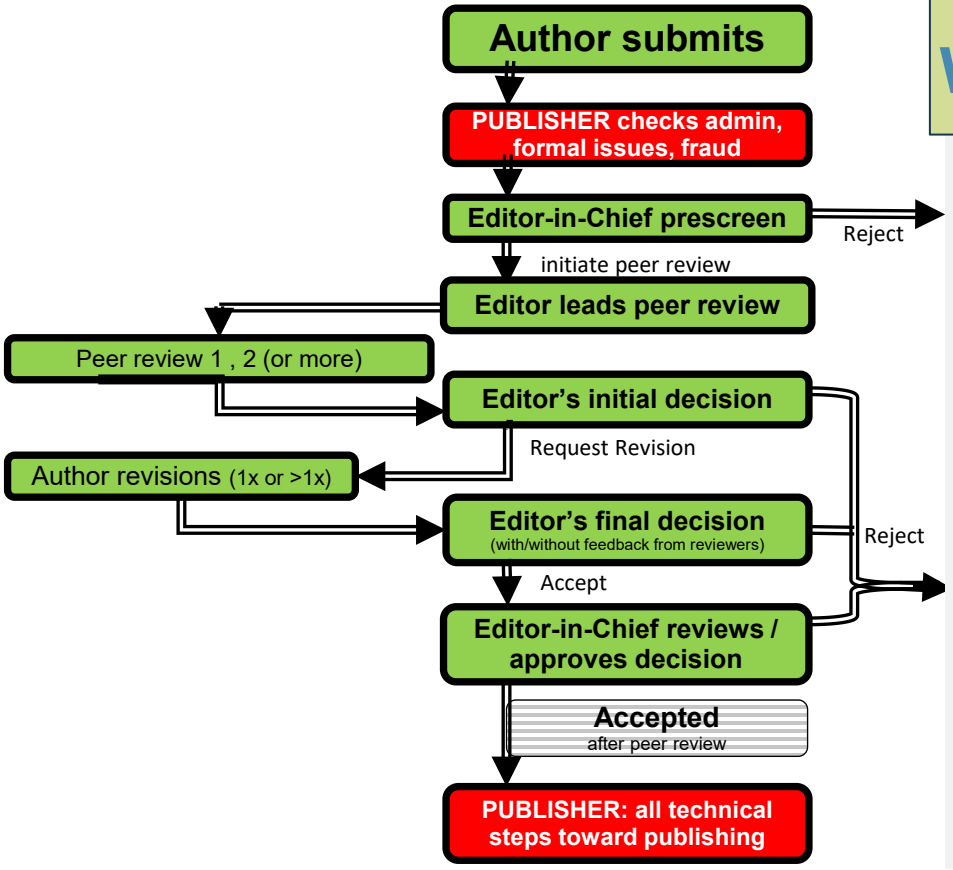
IJPH PHR

- SSPH+ representative of the SSPH+ Journals **Int J Public Health** & **Public Health Reviews**
- Chaired SSPH+ decision and move of IJPH to Open Access (since 2021)
- Chaired SSPH+ decision to buy PHR from ASPHER (Association of Schools of Public Health of the European Region)
- Supervise Open Access Publishing services for IJPH and PHR provided by *Frontiers Media*, Lausanne
- Supervisor of SSPH+ Editorial Manager Office (at Swiss TPH)
- Member Editorial Board of Int J Pub Health (IJPH) since 1997 & Co-Editor in Chief since 2012
- Published peer-reviewed articles since 1992; h-Index is aging
- Act as reviewer since 1995 (10-20 articles/yr)
- Was associate Editor Epidemiology (until 2016), Respiration (until 2019), Swiss Medical Weekly (until 2020)
- Taught applied SSPH+ course for junior scientists about journal editing

Scientist-led peer-review model

(classic traditional model)

ALL GREEN TASKS are led by independent leading scientists



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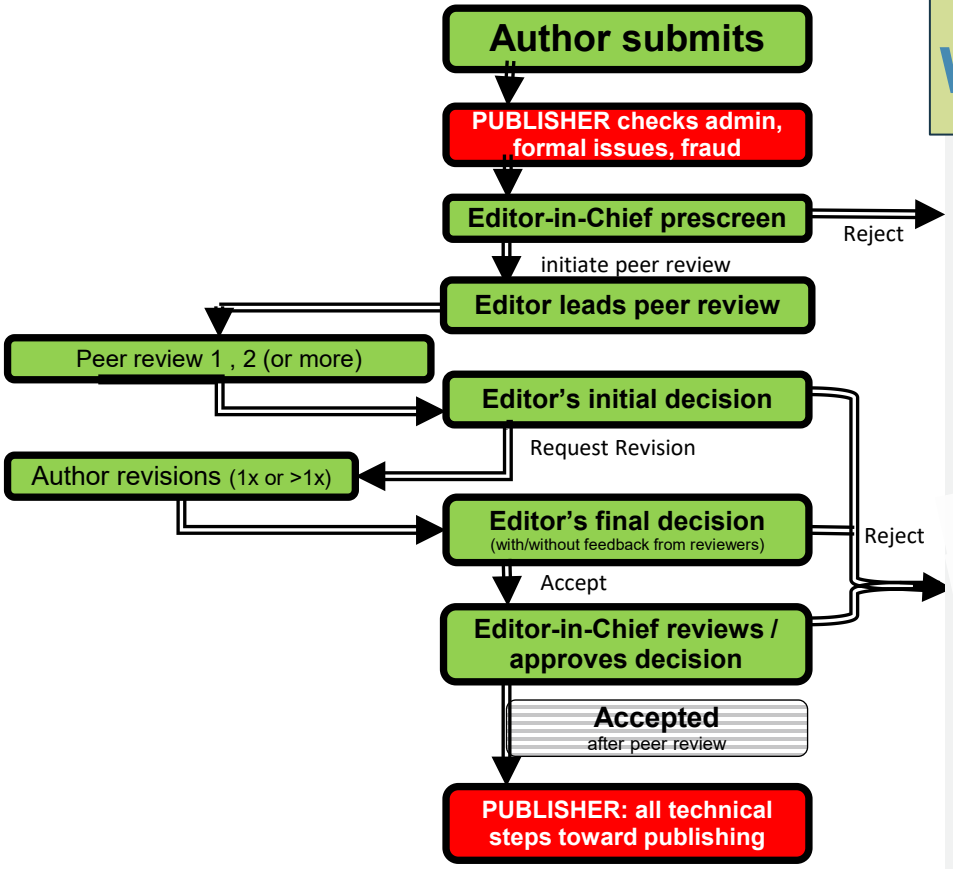

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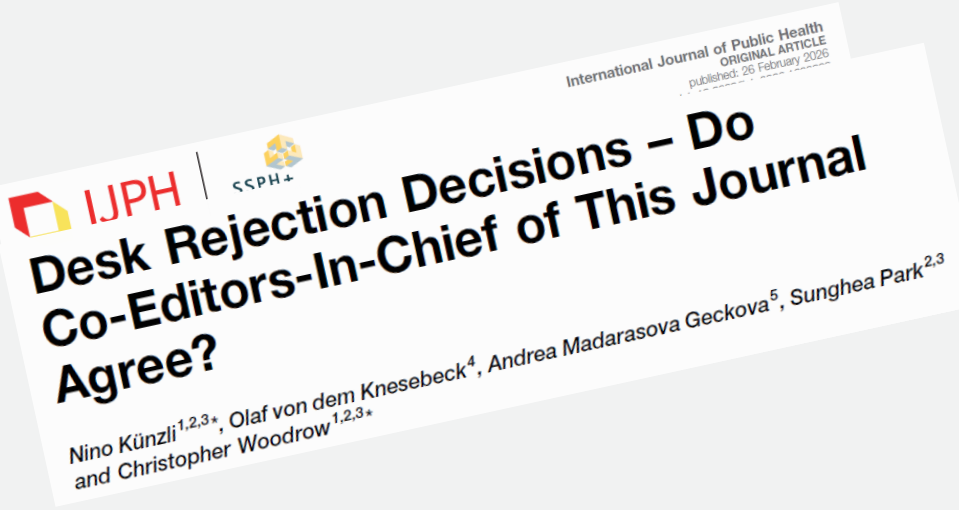


Agenda

- 8 Proposals…
- Discussion



Glossary:

«PEOH» stands for *Web-of-Science category* «Public Environmental Occupational Health»

Preamble:
This talk is not about predatory publishing, fraud, misconduct

Fraud exists because some scientists deliberately opt for…

- plagiarism
- parallel submissions
- submissions to ~10’000+ predatory journals without peer-review
- buying & selling authorships & citations
- buying fake papers from paper-mill industries
- submitting reviews written by AI alone
- etc…

Proposal 1: Go for 100% Open Access = READING is FREE for all – no paywalls!

- **Gold Open Access**:
  authors (or their funders) pay publishing fee = **APC (Article Processing Charges)**

- **Diamond Open Access**: no costs for authors and readers (i.e. some funder covers all publishing costs)

Env Health Perspective
Diamond OA 2027
(Gold OA 2028+)

Open Research Europe
Diamond peer-review platform
not (yet) a "journal" …
soon open not only for Horizon-funded research papers!!

Proposal 1: Go for 100% Open Access = READING is FREE for all – no paywalls!

Proposal 2: Move "publishing funds" into Open Access – boycott hybrids

Stop HYBRID publishing
(i.e. SUBSCRIPTION-based journals with "OPEN ACEES option")

52% of PEOH publications still behind paywell

Hybrid business model adopts **unethical "doubble dipping"**, charging:

1. **for intransparent subscriptions - AND**
2. **for APC fees for Gold Open Access**

APC = Article Processing Charges

Proposal 3: Defend your right to decide where to publish your Open Access work

The exemplary situation in Switzerland:

If you publish in journals of 3 FOR-PROFIT HYBRID publishers, **ALL subscriptions and APC fees are fully covered by "BIG DEALS"** signed by *swissuniversities*.

% share of PEOH 2024 publications

"FREE BEER" for

- ❑ Elsevier (20%)
- ❑ SpringerNature (19%)
- ❑ Wiley (7%)

… If you opt for GOLD OPEN ACCESS journals of other publishers…

NO "BIG DEALS"

NO DEFAULT for "free beer"

- ❑ Frontiers (for-profit) (9%)
- ❑ Oxford University Press (not-for-pr.) (4%)
- ❑ BMJ Publishing (not-for-profit) (2%)
- ❑ Cambridge Uni Press (not-for-pr.) (<2%)
- ❑ PLOS (not-for-profit) (<2%)
- ❑ … and many others (>35%)

including IJPH PHR

Less and less publishers dominate PEOH *) publishing

Year 2000
~11’000 articles & reviews

Out of 84 publishers

- ❑ **40%** (N=34) were **not-for-profit**
- ❑ **33%** (N=28) publish **85%** of all pubs

Year 2025
~60’000 articles & reviews

Out of 184 publishers

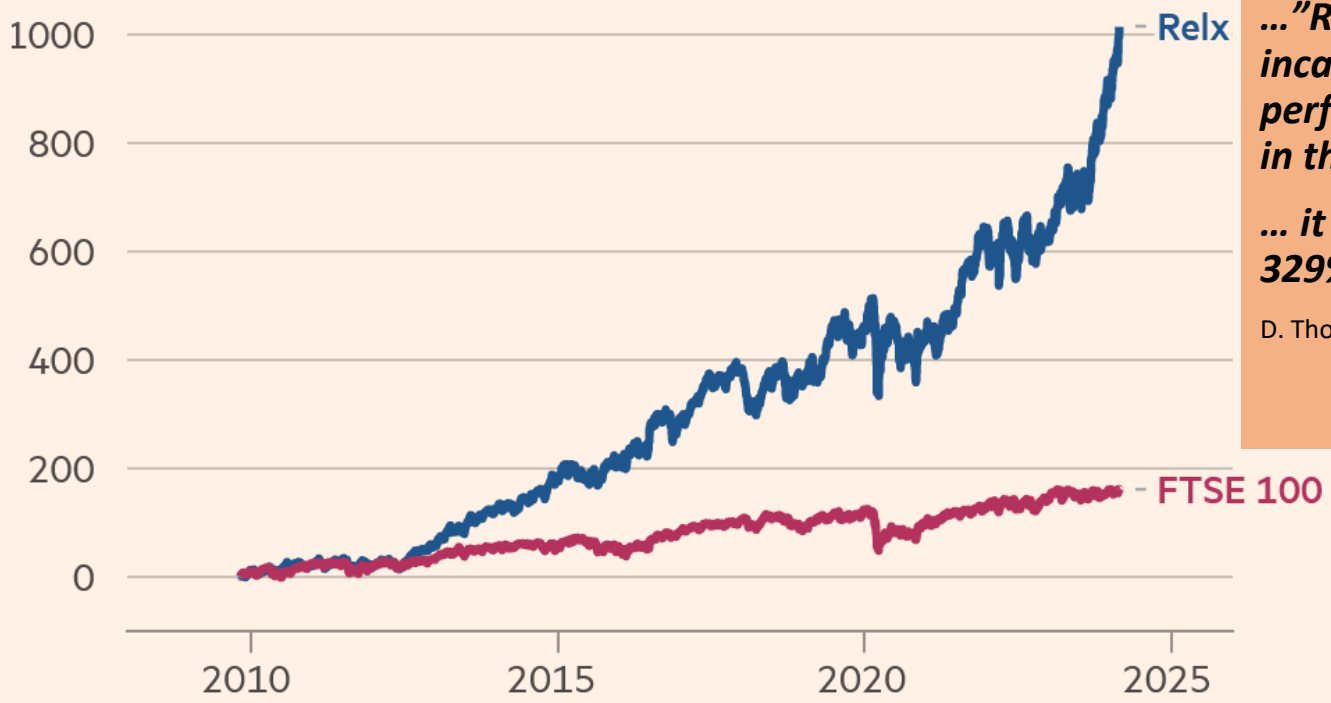
- ❑ **only 13%** (N=24) **are not-for-profit**
- ❑ **8.7%** (N=16) publish **85%** of all pubs

*) WoS category “Public Environmental Occupation Health” – **but same pattern for health sciences in general**

Stock perfomance of Financial Time Stock Exchange 100 versus «RELX» (Reed-Elsevier)

operating profit: 37%

(Meta or Google: 23-25%)



…"RELX, or its previous incarnations, has been the top-performing stock on the FTSE 100 in the index's 40-year history"…

… it outperformed the FTSE 100 by 329%...

D. Thomas and H Agnew, Financial Times, 23.2.2024

CEO Engstrom 2023 salary: £13.6mn – one of the highest paid CEO's of all FTSE 100

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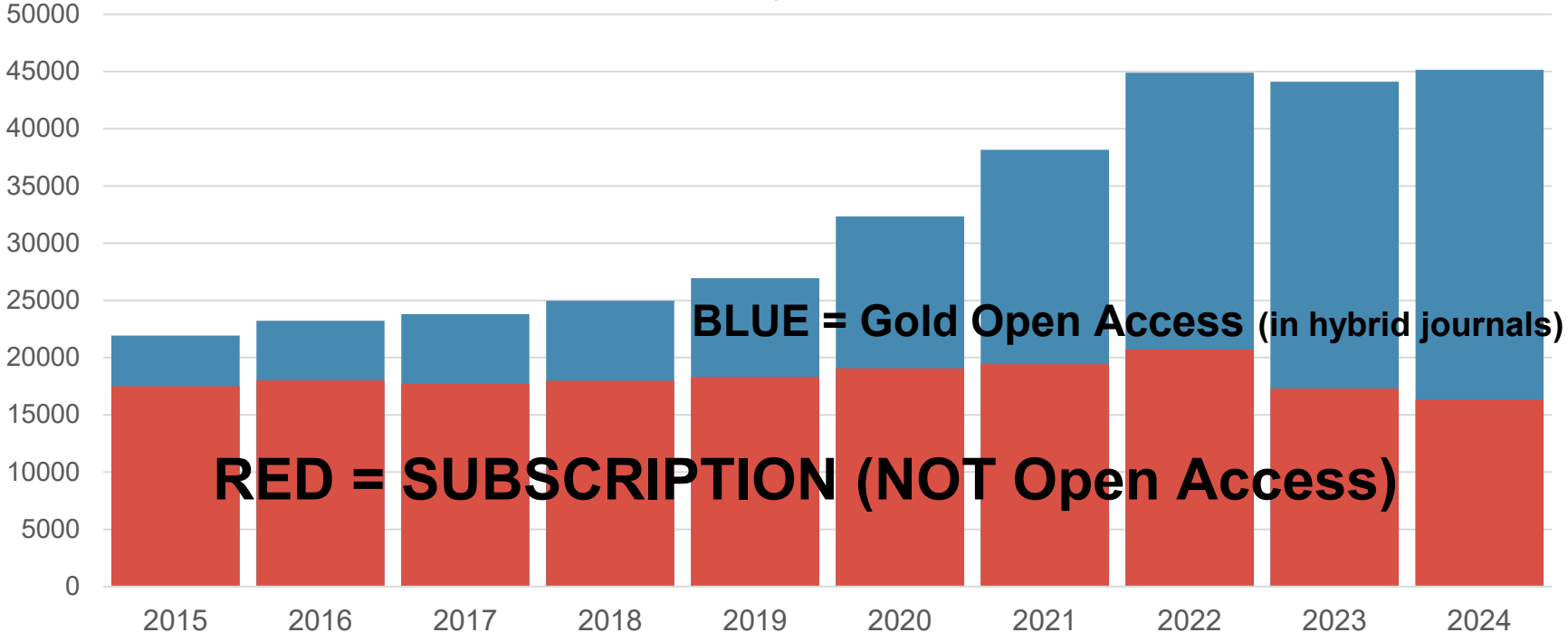
Proposal 4: Challenge journals that refuse to grow (“QUOTA journals”)

DOUBLE-DIPPING STRATEGY of QUOTA HYBRID JOURNALS

Articles and reviews published by the **10 leading *) hybrid publishers** (PEOH category only) derived from Web-of-Science, accessed 22.6.25)



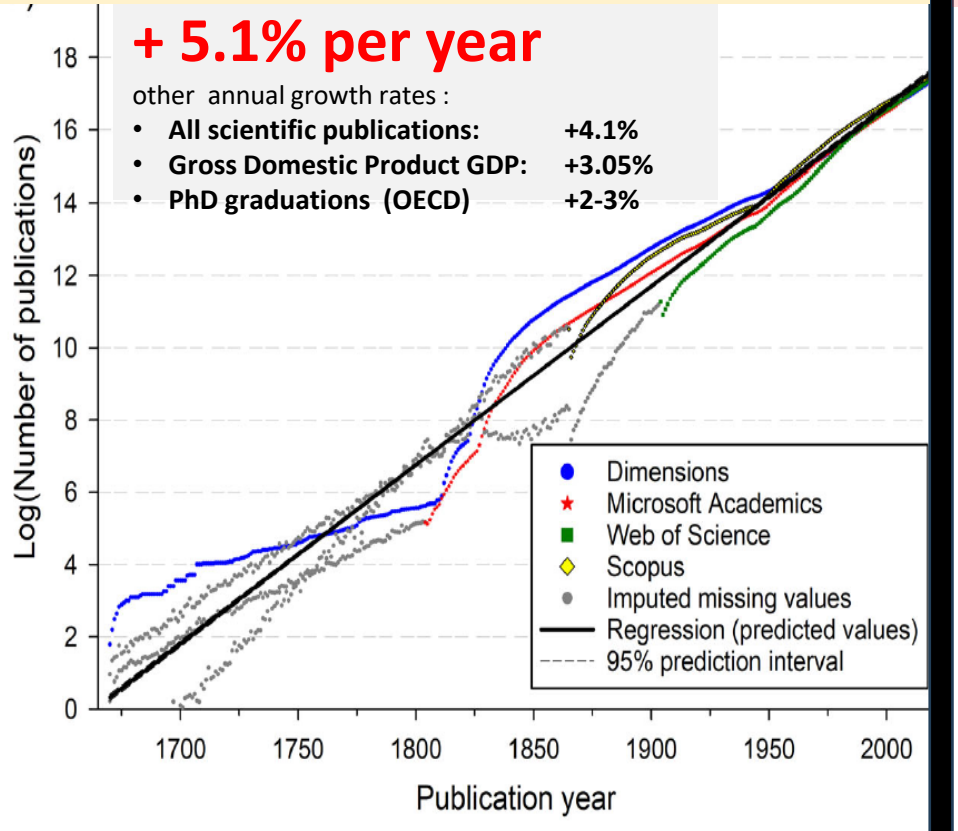
*) Elsevier, Springer Nature, Wiley, Sage, Taylor & Francis, Oxford Univ Press, BMJ Publishing Group, Wolters Kluwer Med Publications, Cambridge Univ Press, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins

In 2024: these 10 published 65% of all PEOH articles/reviews. Elsevier + SpringerNature: 38% of all

Global annual growth rates in scientific publishing

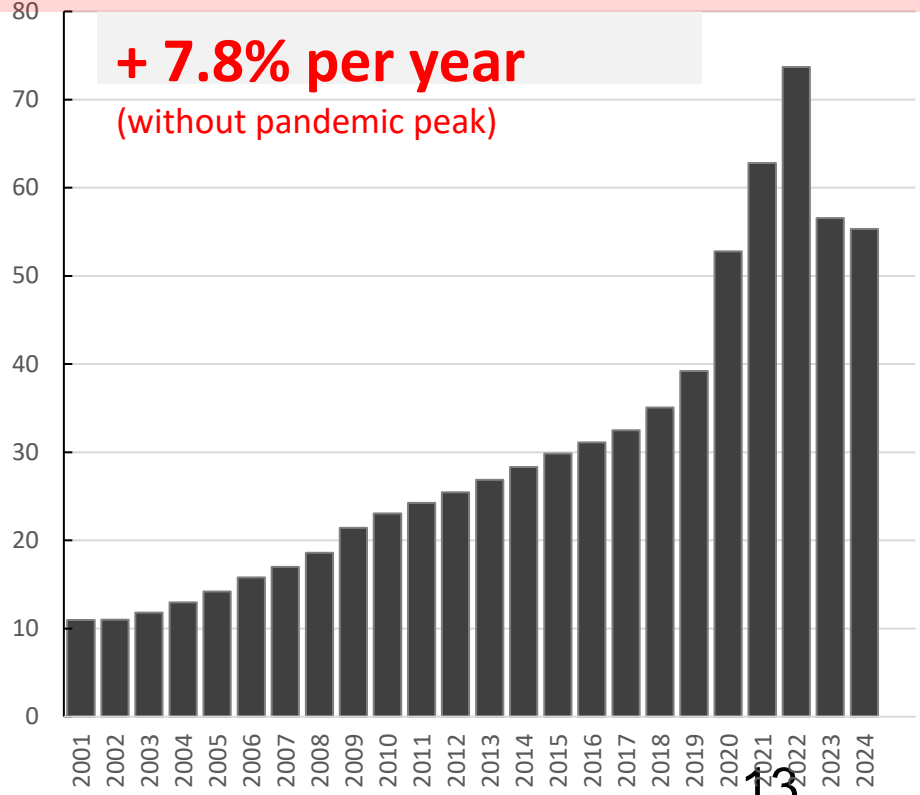
Life Sciences (1660-2018)

Bornmann et al, 2021



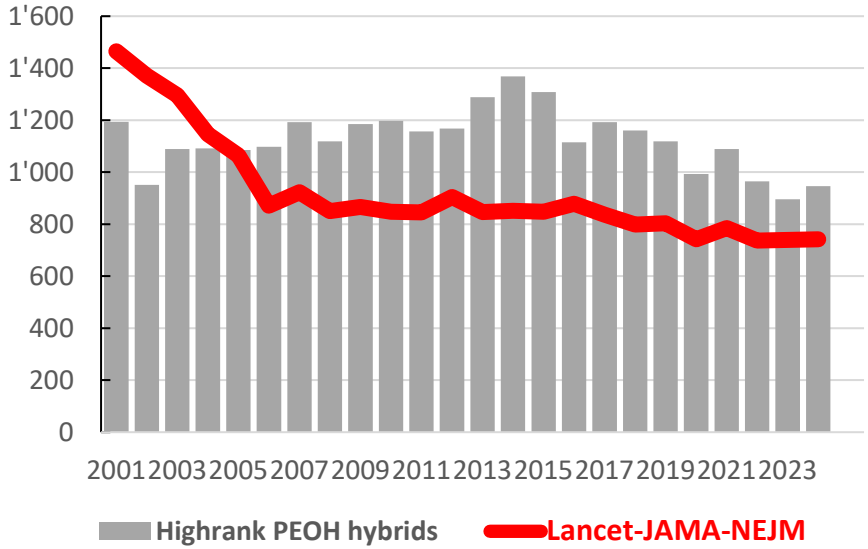
«Public Environmental Occupational Health» (PEOH) (2000-2024)

in Thousands – from Web-of-Science, accessed 25.5.25



Where can scientist publish if good journals do not grow some 8% per year?

10 «prestigious» PEOH hybrid QUOTA journals (in my field *) resist to accomodate growth



*) PEOH Journals: American Journal of Epidemiology, American Journal of Public Health, Epidemiology, European Journal of Epidemiology, International Journal of Epidemiology, Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology
+ Lancet, NEJM, JAMA

In the year 2000,

chance to publish in one of these 10 “leading journals” was

10 times

higher than today!

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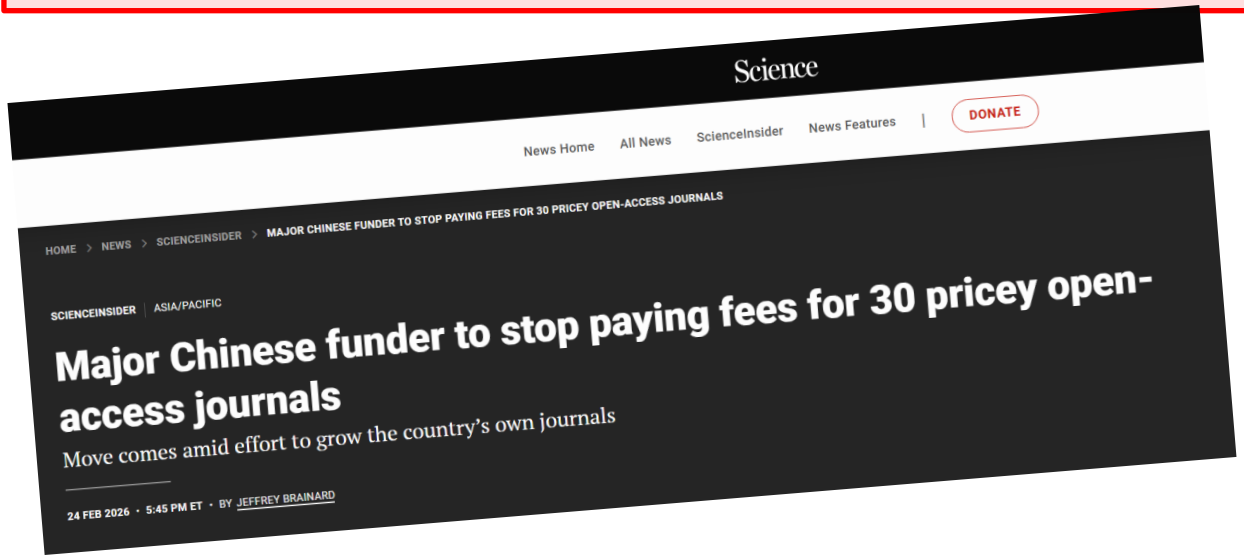
Proposal 5: Boycott predatory APC fees – refuse APCs >3’000 €


Science

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HOME > NEWS > SCIENCEINSIDER > MAJOR CHINESE FUNDER TO STOP PAYING FEES FOR 30 PRICEY OPEN-ACCESS JOURNALS

SCIENCEINSIDER | ASIA/PACIFIC

Major Chinese funder to stop paying fees for 30 pricey open-access journals

Move comes amid effort to grow the country’s own journals

24 FEB 2026 • 5:45 PM ET • BY JEFFREY BRAINARD

As of 2027, Swiss NSF refuses coverage of APCs >3’500 Swiss francs

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Examples of standard APC fees (final fee may vary)

Some GUCCI journals

Lancet	$7'800
Lancet Public Health	$6'680
Lancet Global Health	$6'680
Lancet Planetary Health	$6'680
Nature Communication	$7'390
Nature Health (NEW in2026; hybrid)	$12'850

Some not-for-profit Society Journals

Environ Epidemiology (Gold OA)	$1'400
Am J Pub Health (hybrid):	$2'300
Pub Health Rev (Gold OA)	$2'400 (i.e. CHF 1'980)
Int J Pub Health (Gold OA)	$2'800 (i.e. CHF 2'300)

PS:

Env Health Perspect (Gold OA in 2028	$3'000/3'500

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Proposal 6: Stand up against defamations targeting respected Gold OA publishers

Most recent conspiracy scandal against SSPH+ Open Access journals

- Finnish academic board JUFO provides Ministry of Science & Culture scoring of all journals
- Scoring is relevant for university funding distribution…!

- **Jan 25: JUFO board blacklisted PHR and IJPH as "suspicious" (Level 0)**
- **June 25: Revoked to "Level 1"**

BUT…

- No response, explanation or apology for their defamation

Full story on SSPH+ website:

SSPH+ SWISS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

International Journal of Public Health
COMMENTARY
published: 13 May 2025
doi: 10.3389/ijph.2025.1608614

Check for updates

Conspiracies in Academia? Stand Up Against Defamations of Open Access Journals!

Nino Künzli[1,2], Christopher Woodrow[1]*, Luca Crivelli[2,3], Kasia Czabanowska[4], Olaf von dem Knesebeck[5], Andrea Madarasova Geckova[6], Sarah Mantwill[7], Sunghea Park[1], Milo Puhan[2,8], Ana Isabel Ribeiro[9] and L. Suzanne Suggs[2,10]*

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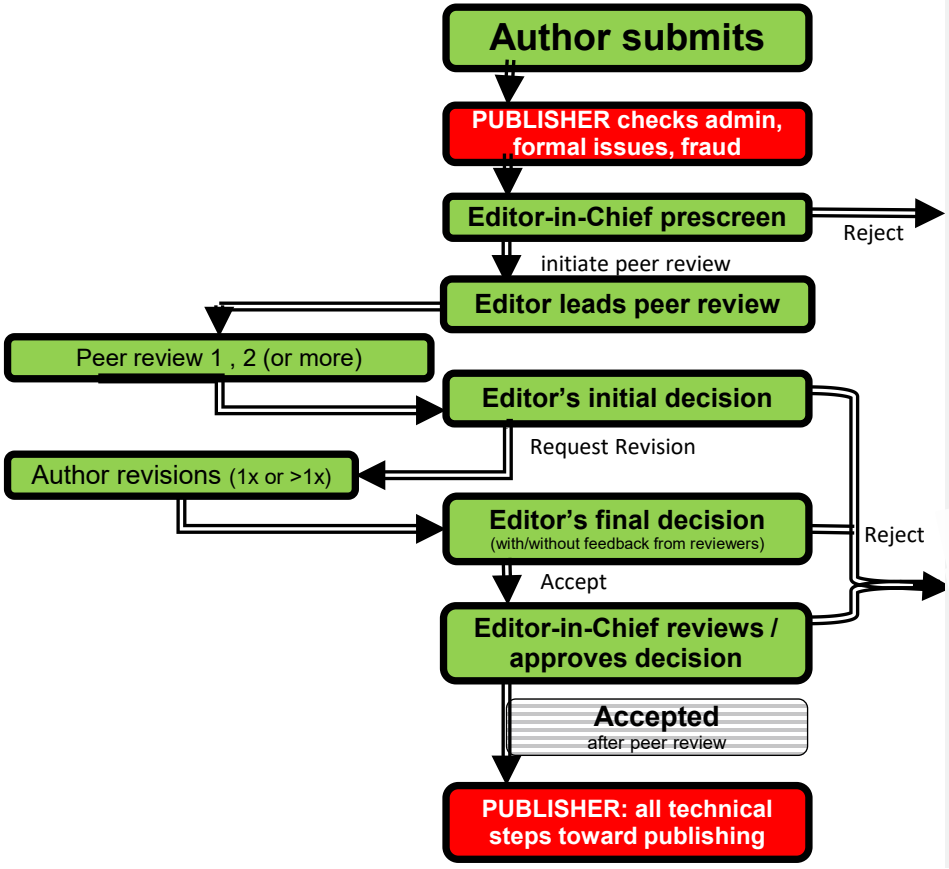
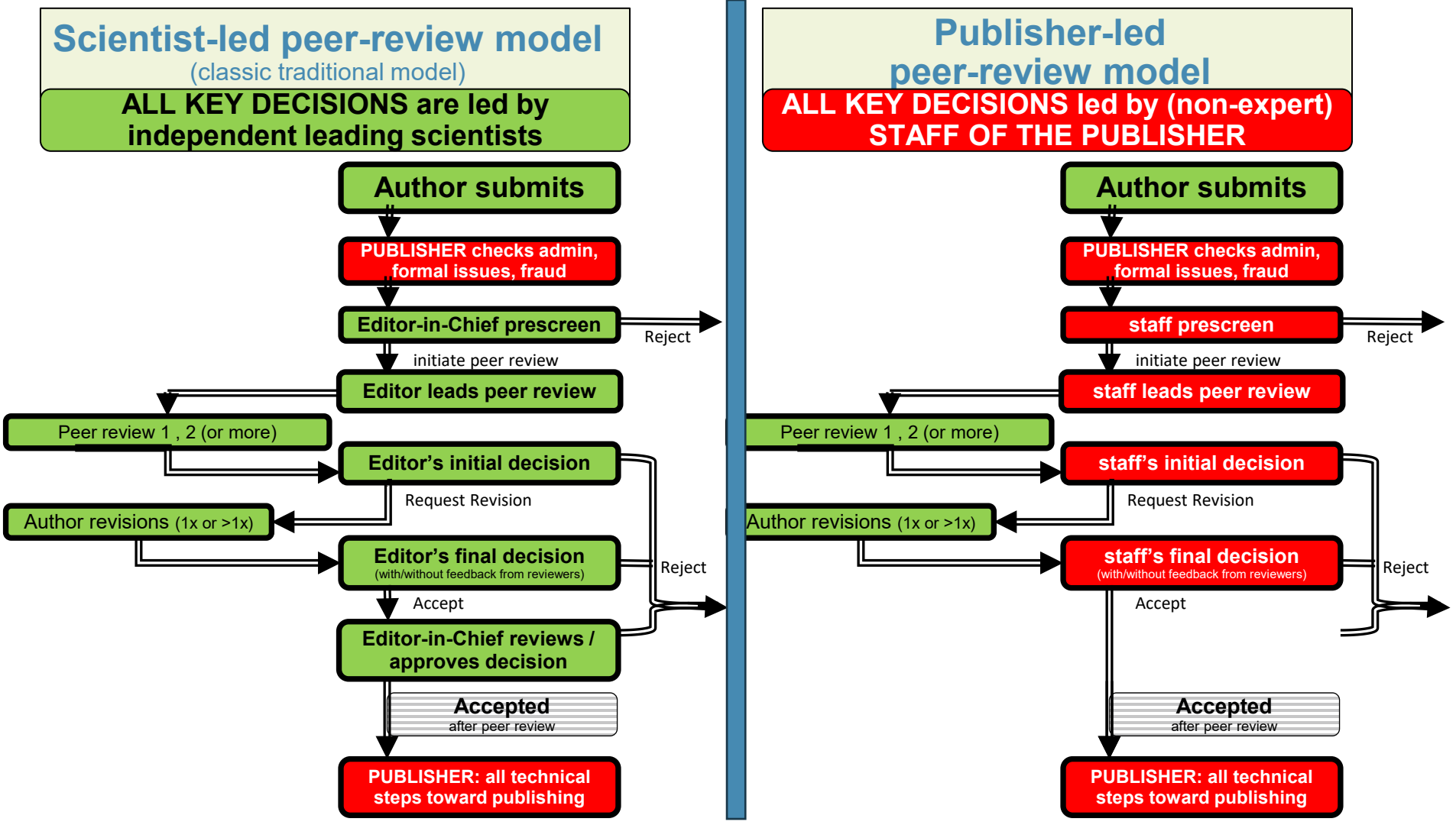
Scientist-led peer-review model
(classic traditional model)

ALL KEY DECISIONS are led by independent leading scientists



authors, editors & reviewers are the epicentre of quality control in peer-review publishing




Scientist-led peer-review model
(classic traditional model)
ALL KEY DECISIONS are led by independent leading scientists
Author submits
PUBLISHER checks admin, formal issues, fraud
Editor-in-Chief prescreen
Reject
initiate peer review
Editor leads peer review
Peer review 1 , 2 (or more)
Editor's initial decision
Request Revision
Author revisions (1x or >1x)
Editor's final decision
(with/without feedback from reviewers)
Reject
Accept
Editor-in-Chief reviews / approves decision
Accepted
after peer review
PUBLISHER: all technical steps toward publishing
Publisher-led peer-review model
ALL KEY DECISIONS led by (non-expert) STAFF OF THE PUBLISHER
Author submits
PUBLISHER checks admin, formal issues, fraud
staff prescreen
Reject
initiate peer review
staff leads peer review
Peer review 1 , 2 (or more)
staff's initial decision
Request Revision
Author revisions (1x or >1x)
staff's final decision
(with/without feedback from reviewers)
Reject
Accept
Accepted
after peer review
PUBLISHER: all technical steps toward publishing

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(classic traditional model)

ALL KEY DECISIONS are led by independent leading scientists

Examples of PEOH journals:

- Int J Public Health
- Public Health Reviews
- European J Public Health
- Environmental Epidemiology
- Environmental Health Perspective
- Frontiers Public Health

- **etc.** *(many society journals)*

Publisher-led peer-review model

ALL KEY DECISIONS led by (non-expert) STAFF OF THE PUBLISHER

Examples of PEOH journals

- Lancet Public Health
- Lancet Global Health
- Lancet Planetary Health
- All 4 Lancet Regional Health journals
- Nature Health
- Nature Communications
- …other Nature-branded OA journals

“NOVELTY”

boosts the Journal Impact Factor

→ high APC fees

→ high revenues

Association between particulate matter $(PM)_{2.5}$ air pollution and clinical antibiotic resistance: a global analysis

Zhenchao Zhou, Xinyi Shuai, Zejun Lin, Xi Yu, Xiaoliang Ba, Mark A Holmes, Yonghong Xiao, Baojing Gu, Hong Chen

Lancet Planetary Health, 2023

Summary

). These findings substantiate that $PM_{2.5}$ is a primary factor driving global antibiotic resistance, suggesting global health could benefit from mitigating antibiotic resistance with $PM_{2.5}$ controls. Our analysis is the first report on the relationship betw
clinical antibiotic resistan

They assigned 33+% of Antibiotic-Resistance-Mortality to ambient air pollution !!

IJPH
SSPH+ SWISS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
International Journal of Public Health
EDITORIAL
published: 21 August 2023
doi: 10.3389/ijph.2023.1606497

Check for updates

Be Aware: Science Is Not Ready to Calculate the Antimicrobial Resistance Death due to Air Pollution

Nino Künzli[1,2]*, *Meltem Kutlar Joss*[1,2] and *Ron Kappeler*[1,2]

[1]*Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, Allschwil, Switzerland,* [2]*University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland*

The «NOVELTY» in Lancet Planetary Health fullfilled its ultimate purpose:

- ❑ Outstanding media echo
- ❑ Skyrocking 105 CITATIONS (as of 25.8.26) booster the Impact Factor

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Proposal 8: Stop the worship, adoration and tribute to the Journal Impact Factor

Despite the 2012 San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

JIF = Journal Impact Factor

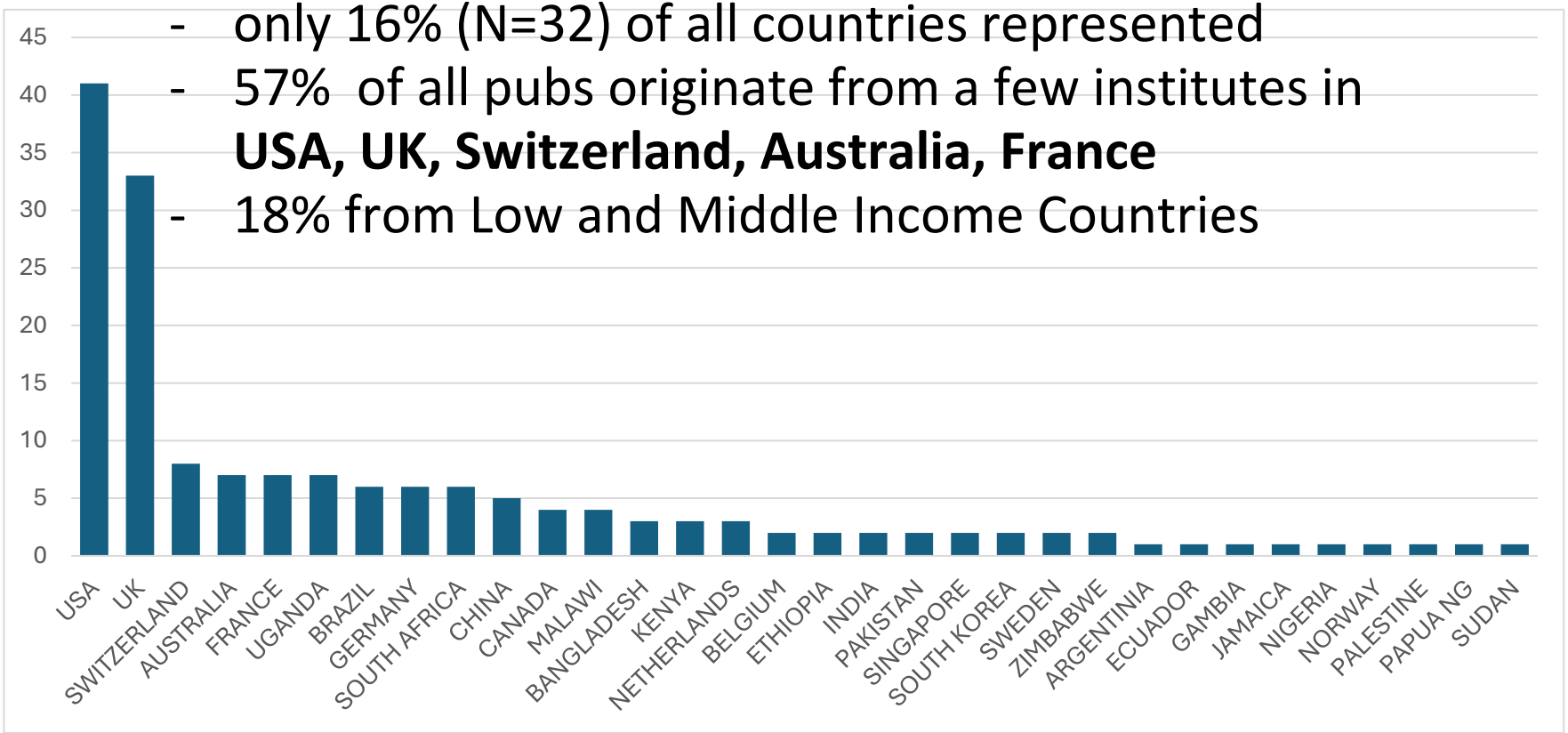
remains the leading toxic currency of academia

Still, no alternative, standardized, easily accessible QUALITY indicators available (e.g.: the scientific standing and independence of the editors…)

The small elite world of Lancet "Global" Health

Affiliation country of first authors of 2024 articles and reviews (N=168) Clarivate Web of Science accessed 31.5.2025. ***(from Künzli et al, IJPH 2026 – Supplement – Fig S2)***

- only 16% (N=32) of all countries represented
- 57% of all pubs originate from a few institutes in **USA, UK, Switzerland, Australia, France**
- 18% from Low and Middle Income Countries



In conclusion…. I propose CHANGE….

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… make informed strategic decisions as AUTHOR, REVIEWER, EDITOR, ACADEMIC LEADER

Prioritize … :

Open Access Journals (***no hybrids)***

… published by Diamond or Gold OA publishers (***boycotte hybrid publishers***)

… owned by not-for-profit academic societies

… led by independent leading scientists (editors) (i.***e. boycotte journals led by staff of publisher***)

… that accomodate growth ***(force journals to give up «quota»)***

Combat the Journal Impact Factor addiction in academia

Thank you for making a difference

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… contact me if you are editors of an independent society journal… we should collaborate…

NKuenzli@SSPHplus.ch

IJPH

Email from author, during peer review
(fall 2024)

Dear Editor,
…., your journal's impact factor has decreased to 2.6. Since our institution… can only pay fees for journals with … impact factor of more than 3 …, …..
Therefore, we … request the withdrawal of the manuscript….