ACTA INFORMATICA MEDICA IS INDEXED IN PUBMED AND ARCHIVED IN PUBMED CENTRAL

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Twenty years ago, at the height of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), I and Zoran Ridjanovic decided to launch the first journal of medical informatics in Southeast Europe (1, 2, 3). The difficult decision gave birth to a medium of science communication, which turned out to be a ‘wonder of Sarajevo’. The city was then under siege, which put people in coma for 1479 days. There were no electricity, safe drinking water, food, firewood, and logistics for printing. A package of blank papers for reproduction of 500 sheets costed nearly 30 Euros. This was considered as a scientific curiosity at European and global conferences on medical informatics (2).

The circulation of Acta Informatica Medica during the war was roughly 50 copies, printed on a primitive copy-machine and compiled on the hybrid PC XT...
4.7 MHz, which is almost unbelievable from today’s perspective. These print issues were distributed across Europe and elsewhere in the world by prominent political and military officials and representatives of international organizations, such as the Doctors Without Borders and the World Health Organization, visiting Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina with various wartime missions. (figure 1 and 2).

Initially, the journal was published biannually, each issue with 52 pages, binned in the A4 notebooks. At that time, this format was the only feasible option. Later on, the journal moved to the trice-yearly, and finally to the quarterly publishing frequency in English only in the past five years.

Gradually, interest of the readership to health informatics in war and post-war conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina had grown. And many great authors contributed to the quality of the journal by submitting papers of interest to local and international healthcare experts. Without exaggeration, papers published in Acta Informatica Medica allowed overcoming information blockade in Sarajevo and solving essential healthcare issues of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1990s. Further development of the journal as a specialized reference for experts in health informatics and science communication raised its prestige among experts from professional associations in the former Yugoslavian countries and in Europe at large.

In the post-war years, the journal had an advantage to be represented at almost all meetings of the European Federation for Medical Informatics (EFMI) and the International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA). As a recognition of the international reach and comprehensive coverage of medical informatics, the journal became an official organ of EFMI in 2005 (1). It has also become a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), the UK-based organizations promoting standards of science communication and journal quality improvements globally. Acta Informatica Medica was represented at the latest conference of EASE in Tallinn, Estonia (4).

One of the major improvements for the journal was the expansion of the Editorial Board in the past few years, that now includes eminent journal editors, experts in various fields of medical informatics and communication from all over the world, actively contributing to the quality of the constantly growing number of submissions. The re-shape of the journal in the past few years was mainly due to the constructive criticism and editorial support of icons in current medical informatics, Arie Hasman, Reinhold Haux, John Mantas, Jacob Hofdijk, Gjuro Dezelic and many devoted scientists, who guided us through the journal indexing labyrinths. Our editors committed themselves to following all the recommendations aimed at improving citability and indexability of scholarly journals (5, 6).

Though there is still much work to be done, we should appreciate passing the key milestones toward global journal visibility. In the past two years, Acta Informatica Medica was accepted for coverage/citation tracking by Scopus, EMBASE, PubMed, PubMed Central, and some other prestigious international databases. The total number of abstracting and cataloguing online databases for the journal is now exceeding 20.

Archiving of the Acta by PubMed Central puts it in the very short list of medical/health informatics and science communication publications with global visibility. Notably, there are now only 29 journals listed in the medical informatics category by the Science Citation Index Expanded® (SciSearch®) database. This gives us a unique opportunity to attract more prestigious citations and eventually get indexed by the Web of Science® and Thomson Reuters’ other relevant databases.

Remarkably, the acceptance for indexing and archiving by PubMed and PubMed Central coincides with the 20th anniversary of the journal. Undoubtedly, this great achievement comes as a reward for relentless efforts of our international editorial team.

The 20th volume of the journal is fully international. It contains articles from the following 18 countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Iran, Qatar, Turkey, USA, Egypt, Albania, Austria, Macedonia, Malaysia, Sudan, Iraq, China, India, Greece, UK. Understandably, most papers in this jubilee volume

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Figure 2. Impressum of Acta Inform Med 2006-2011
are from B&H - 17, followed by Malaysia - 4, India and Turkey-3, USA, Kosovo, Iraq and Macedonia-2. The ratio of articles from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the international ones is 0.6. The large proportion of articles are in applied medical informatics (73.3%), followed by preclinical articles (15.5%), and those in public health informatics (11.1%). Time from submission to acceptance of the articles is now up to 2 months.

We will continue prioritizing original research papers and reviews from Balkan countries and Southeastern Europe, as this journal is the only English-language and PubMed Central-archived medium of communication in its field in this part of the world.

Standards of sharing validated and easily understandable scientific information will be also discussed on pages of our journal to contribute to the regional growth of science. More peers will be involved in the reviewing and commenting submissions to filter out research papers with weak methodology and low level of evidence.

As the journal is now visible on PubMed (figure 3) a service of the US National Library of Medicine and an interface for evidence-based biomedical information, we are now obliged to publish papers with strong evidence to contribute to the global pool of scientific knowledge (“Noblesse oblige”).

REFERENCES