



BALKAN MEDICAL JOURNAL

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF TRAKYA UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF MEDICINE

Citation Abbreviation: *Balkan Med J (Formerly Trakya Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi Dergisi)*

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AIMS AND SCOPE

The Balkan Medical Journal is a peer-reviewed open-access international journal that publishes interesting clinical and experimental research conducted in all fields of medicine, interesting case reports and clinical images, invited reviews, editorials, letters, comments and letters to the Editor including reports on publication and research ethics. The journal is the official scientific publication of the Trakya University Faculty of Medicine, Edirne, Turkey and is printed four times a year, in March, June, September and December. The language of the journal is English.

The journal is based on independent and unbiased double-blinded peer-reviewed principles. Only unpublished papers that are not under review for publication elsewhere can be submitted. The authors are responsible for the scientific content of the material to be published. The Balkan Medical Journal reserves the right to request any research materials on which the paper is based.

The Balkan Medical Journal encourages and enables academicians, researchers, specialists and primary care physicians of Balkan countries to publish their valuable research in all branches of medicine. The primary aim of the journal is to publish original articles with high scientific and ethical quality and serve as a good example of medical publications in the Balkans as well as in the World.

The Editorial Board of the Balkan Medical Journal and the Publisher adheres to the principles of the International Council of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), the Council of Science Editors (CSE), the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the US National Library of Medicine (NLM), the World Medical Association (WMA), the US Office of Research Integrity (ORI), the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), and the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE).

The Balkan Medical Journal is indexed in CAB Abstracts, Chemical Abstracts, CINAHL, DOAJ, EBSCO, EMBASE, Global Health, Google Scholar, Index Copernicus, Journal Citation Reports, PubMed Central, Science Citation Index Expanded (Web of Science), Scopus and ULAKBIM Turkish Medical Database databases. Printed copies of the journal are distributed to over 150 university libraries in 14 Balkan countries and all around the World. All articles are also available in PDF format on our website (www.balkanmedicaljournal.org) and can be downloaded free of charge.

MISSION

The Balkan Medical Journal's mission is to distribute and expand medical data to the World as well as build a supportive and vibrant community of scholars to connect and explore ideas by publishing articles related to all fields of medicine. In addition to the educational material and links available on the journal's webpage, the Balkan Medical Journal Editorial Board has also been organizing educational meetings in the subjects of medical research, writing and scientific ethics.

The Balkan Medical Journal believes that quality and ethical research and publication will lead to the progress of medical sciences and healthcare in Balkan countries as well as worldwide.

EDITORIAL PROCESS AND PEER REVIEW

All manuscripts submitted for publication are strictly reviewed for their originality, methodology, importance, quality, ethical nature and suitability for the journal. The Balkan Medical Journal uses a well-constructed scheme for the evaluation process. The editor-in-chief has full authority over the editorial and scientific content of the Balkan Medical Journal and the timing of publication of the content.

The whole editorial and peer review process can be divided into 20 successive steps:

1. 1st technical review by the Editorial Secretary
2. 1st review by the Editor-in-Chief: [immediate reject, immediate revision or further evaluation]
3. 1st review by the Section Editors (and/or Associate Editors)
4. 1st similarity check
5. 1st evaluation at the weekly Editorial Board Meeting
6. 2nd review by the Editor-in-Chief: [immediate reject, immediate revision or further evaluation]
7. 1st review by two or more external reviewers
8. 1st review by a Biostatistician
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10. 2nd evaluation by the Section Editors
11. Revisions (if needed)
12. 2nd evaluation at the weekly Editorial Board Meeting
13. 3rd review by the Editor-in-Chief [reject or revision]
14. 2nd similarity recheck
15. Assignment of DOI number
16. Copy editing
17. Galley proof preparation
18. Final review by the Editorial Secretary, Section Editors and the Editor-in-Chief
19. 3rd similarity check
20. Publication

Technical reviews are typically processed one week after submission. From stage 2 to 7, the evaluation usually takes 1 to 3 weeks. From stage 7 to 14, the overall evaluation takes 2 to 10 weeks. Starting February 2013, the publication process after submission may take 2 to 6 months. However, all accepted manuscripts are assigned with a DOI number following their acceptance and they are published Ahead of Print prior to their inclusion in their scheduled issue.

Very few manuscripts are rejected at the 2nd stage. About one-third of manuscripts are accepted for further evaluation at the 6th stage. The remaining manuscripts may be accepted at the 13th stage.

Overall, the acceptance rate of the Balkan Medical Journal is between 10% and 15%, and the median response time for all submissions is 3 weeks (2 weeks for rejected papers, and for accepted papers, 5 weeks for the first revision request by the external reviewers). The median overall response time for accepted papers is 13 weeks because the editors and reviewers of the Balkan Medical Journal usually need to assist authors to improve their papers through several revisions to increase the quality of the articles published in the journal.

ETHICS

The Balkan Medical Journal is committed to the highest standards of research and publication ethics, and does not allow any form of plagiarism. All submitted manuscripts are screened with plagiarism software at least two times during the evaluation process to detect instances of overlapping and similar text. High similarity scores (>20%) may lead rejection of a manuscript. The editors will act in accordance with the relevant international rules of publication and research ethics (COPE guidelines, WAME resources, WMA policies and ORI) if any ethical misconduct is suspected.

In accordance with the journal's policy, an approval of research protocols by an ethics committee in accordance with international agreements "WMA Declaration of Helsinki - Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (last updated: October 2013, Fortaleza, Brazil)", "Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals (8th edition, 2011)" and/or "International Guiding Principles for Biomedical Research Involving Animals (2012)" is required for all experimental, clinical and drug trial studies. For articles concerning experimental research on humans, a statement should be included that shows informed consent of patients and volunteers was obtained following a detailed explanation of the procedures that they may undergo. The journal may request a copy of the Ethics Committee Approval received from the relevant authority. Informed consent must also be obtained for case reports. More details on the ethical principles of the journal may be found at the "Ethical Guidelines" and the "Instructions to Reviewers" pages.

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The Balkan Medical Journal's editorial review process is in accordance with the Good Editorial Practice set by international editorial organizations (WAME, COPE). WAME indicates that "conflict of interest exists when an author, reviewer, or editor in the publication process (submission of manuscripts, peer review, editorial decisions, and communication between authors, reviewers and editors) has a competing interest that could unduly influence his or her responsibilities (academic honesty, unbiased conduct and reporting of research, and integrity of decisions or judgments) in the publication process".

The Balkan Medical Journal requires that each author, reviewer, and editor must disclose to the editor-in-chief any conflict of interest related to family, personal, financial, political or religious issues as well as any competing interest outlined above at the WAME's definition. Whether or not a conflict of interest and financial support exist, they must be declared at the *Conflict of Interest Statement* as well as at the end of the manuscripts. If a reviewer, an associate editor, or a section editor has a conflict of interest and/or believes that it is not appropriate to be a reviewer, or an editor for a given manuscript, the reviewer or the editor should resign from the assignment. The Balkan Medical Journal requests that all members of the core editorial board



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v.3.1 (updated March 2014. Please check the Journal's website for the latest version)

MANUSCRIPT FORMATTING

Manuscript format must be in accordance with the ICMJE-Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals (updated in August 2013 - <http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>). Papers that do not comply with the format of the Journal will be returned to the author for correction without further review. Therefore, to avoid loss of time and work, authors must carefully review the submission rules.

General Format

The manuscript should be typed in a Microsoft Word™ file, single-column format, double-spaced with 2.5 cm margins on each side, and 11-point type in Times New Roman font.

All abbreviations in the text must be defined the first time they are used (both in the abstract and the main text), and the abbreviations should be displayed in parentheses after the definition. Abbreviations should be limited to those defined in the AMA Manual of Style, current edition. Authors should avoid abbreviations in the title and abstract and limit their use in the main text.

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Identification of article type is the first step of manuscript submission because article type dictates the guidelines that should be used (see below, Using Guidelines), including formatting and word limits of the manuscript. The main categories of article type are outlined below:

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Type of the Manuscript	Word Limit	Abstract Word Limit	Reference Limit	Author Limit
Original Article	3000 ¹	400 ⁴	30	None
Invited Review	5000 ¹	400	60	5
Case Report	1200 ¹	250 ⁵	10	5
Clinical Image	500 ²	N/A	5	5
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ences, tables, and figure legends. There should be a maximum of 30 references.

- **Invited Review Article:** Invited review articles are comprehensive analyses of specific topics in medicine, which are written upon invitation due to extensive experience and publications of authors on the review subjects. All invited review articles will also undergo peer review prior to acceptance. Review articles must not exceed 5000 words for the main text (excluding references, tables, and figure legends) and 400 words for the abstract. A review article can be signed by no more than 5 authors and can have no more than 60 references.
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The Balkan Medical Journal encourages the registration of all clinical trials via ClinicalTrials.gov (www.clinicaltrials.gov) or one of the registries of the WHO's International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP: <http://www.who.int/ictRP/network/primary/en/index.html>). Especially the phase 3 clinical trials must be registered at or before the time of first patient enrollment. The name of the registry and the registration number should be provided at the end of the abstract.

Authors should also refer to the guidelines below when preparing their manuscript:

- **Randomized controlled trials**
CONSORT (<http://www.consort-statement.org/home/>)
- **CONSORT translations**
www.consort-statement.org/consort-statement/translations/
- **Standard protocol items for randomized trials**
SPRIT (<http://www.spirit-statement.org/>)
- **Observational research: cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies**
STROBE (www.strobe-statement.org)
- **Diagnostic accuracy studies**
STARD (www.stard-statement.org)
- **Systematic reviews and meta-analyses**
PRISMA (www.prisma-statement.org)
- **Non-randomized behavioral and public health intervention trials**
TREND (www.cdc.gov/trendstatement)
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ARRIVE (www.nc3rs.org.uk/arrive)
- **For further information on the reporting guidelines for health research, authors are suggested to refer to the EQUATOR network website** (<http://www.equator-network.org/>)

PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF A MANUSCRIPT

The entire submission process for a manuscript is completed online through the self-explanatory online submission system through the following website: <http://mc04.manuscript-central.com/balkanmedj>. The submission should be divided into SEPARATE files in the following order:

1. Cover Letter
2. Title Page
3. Main Document (Main text, references, tables, and figure legends. Abstract of the manuscript should be submitted through the submission system)



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4. Figures
5. Authorship Contributions Form
6. Copyright Transfer Form
7. Conflict of Interest Statement Form
8. Turkish Abstract (Only required for submissions from Turkey)

Cover Letter

The cover letter should include the article title, article type, and the full name of the corresponding author. The corresponding author should briefly summarize why his/her paper is a valuable addition to the scientific literature and specify the type of article he/she is submitting (for example, original article, case report, review article, clinical image). The cover letter should also include a statement declaring the absence or presence of a conflict of interest (please refer to *Conflict of Interest Statement* page for details). Furthermore, there should be a statement that the manuscript has not already been published, accepted or under simultaneous review for publication elsewhere. Balkan Medical Journal does not accept multiple submission and duplicate submission. Please refer to the editorial (Balkan Med J 2013;30:1-2) on this subject for more details. For manuscripts that have been presented orally or as a poster, this must be stated on the title page with the date and the place of the presentation. An example of a cover letter can be found on the journal's webpage.

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This should include:

- The complete manuscript title (no more than 150 characters)
- The running head (no more than 50 characters)
- Word counts for the abstract and text (the text word count does not include references, tables, and figure legends)
- The number of references, and the number of figures and tables
- All authors' full names, affiliations and e-mail addresses (all authors should meet the ICMJE's requirements for authorship – see details at “author contribution form”)
- The name, address, telephone and fax numbers and email address of the corresponding author
- Keywords (3-6 key words from the list provided in Index Medicus under “Medical Subject Heading (MeSH)”)
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- Acknowledgements: All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship (ICMJE: authorship and contributorship: http://www.icmje.org/ethical_1author.html) and the statement of conflict of interest and funding should be declared under this subheading.

Abstracts

Original articles, invited review articles and case reports should include an abstract. The abstract should be written in both English. A Turkish abstract is required with submissions from Turkey and the Turkish abstract should be submitted in a separate file through the submission system. For international submissions, a translation service for the abstract will be provided by the journal if the manuscript is accepted for publication, free of charge. Abstracts for original articles should be structured with the following subheadings: Background, Aims, Study design, Methods, Results, and Conclusion. Abstracts for case reports should be structured with the following subheadings: Background, Case Report, and Conclusion. Abstracts for review articles should not be structured. Clinical images, Editorials, Letters to the Editor, and Commentaries should not contain an abstract. Please find the guidelines for abstracts of specific types of manuscripts under the Main Text section below.

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References

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- Journal article: Korytina G, Kochetova O, Akhmadishina L, Viktorova E, Victorova T. Polymorphisms of cytochrome P450 genes in three ethnic groups from Russia. *Balkan Med J* 2012;29:252-60.
- Book: Tos M. Cartilage tympanoplasty. 1st ed. Stuttgart-New York: Georg Thieme Verlag; 2009.
- Book chapter: Tos M, Stangerup SE. The relationship between secretory otitis and cholesteatoma. In: Tos M, Thomsen J, Peitersen E, editors. Cholesteatoma and mastoid surgery. Amsterdam: Kugler & Ghedini; 1989:325-30.
- Abstract: Gurakar A, Elshawi K, Akdogan M, Wright H, Nour, B, Sebastian T, et al. Asplenia and primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC): A mere coincidence? *Hepatology* 2002;36:673a (abstract).
- Article in electronic format: Morse SS. Factors in the emergence of infectious diseases. *Emerg Infect Dis* (serial online) 1995 Jan-Mar (cited 1996 June 5): 1(1): (24 screens). Available from: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2626828/pdf/8903148.pdf>
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Tables should be presented within the main document after the reference list. All tables should be referred to within the main text and they should be numbered consecutively in the order they are referred to within the main text. A descriptive title should be provided for all tables and the titles should be placed above the tables. Abbreviations used in the tables should be defined below the tables (even if they are defined within the main text). Tables should be created using the "insert table" command of the word processing software and they should be arranged clearly to provide an easy reading.

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Example: Figure 1. a-c. Primary culture of choroid plexuses on day 2 after seeding of dissociated cells (×400). Nestin staining in green (a). GFAP staining in red (b). Nuclear labelling in blue and merged images (c)

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- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
- Final approval of the version to be published; AND
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Please refer to "conflict of interest policy" for more information.

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To finalize submission, the corresponding author should ensure that all files mentioned below have been uploaded:

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 - the article title and type and the full name of the corresponding author
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ETHICAL GUIDELINES

The Balkan Medical Journal is committed to the highest standards of research and publication ethics. If ethical misconduct is suspected, the Editorial Board will act in accordance with the relevant international rules of publication ethics (i.e., COPE guidelines, WAME resources, WMA policies and ORI).

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INSTRUCTIONS TO REVIEWERS

v.1.2 (updated March 2014. Please check the Journal's website for the latest version)

The Balkan Medical Journal is a peer-reviewed open-access international journal that publishes interesting clinical and experimental research conducted in all fields of medicine, interesting case reports and clinical images, invited reviews, editorials, letters, comments and letters to the Editor including reports on publication and research ethics. The language of the journal is English. The journal is based on independent and unbiased double-blinded peer-reviewed principles. Only unpublished papers that are not under review for publication elsewhere can be submitted.

The primary aim of the journal is to publish original articles with high scientific and ethical quality and serve as a good example of medical publications in the Balkans. The Balkan Medical Journal believes that quality publication will lead to the progress of medical sciences and healthcare in Balkan countries as well as worldwide. The Balkan Medical Journal is indexed in CAB Abstracts, Chemical Abstracts, CINAHL, DOAJ, EBSCO, EMBASE, Global Health, Google Scholar, Index Copernicus, Journal Citation Reports, PubMed Central, Science Citation Index Expanded (Web of Science), Scopus and ULAKBIM Turkish Medical Database databases.

The Editorial Board of the Balkan Medical Journal and the Publisher adheres to the principles of the International Council of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), the Council of Science Editors (CSE), the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the US National Library of Medicine (NLM), the US Office of Research Integrity (ORI), the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), and the International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE). The editor-in-chief has full authority over the editorial and scientific content of the Balkan Medical Journal and the timing of publication of the content.

All articles submitted for publication are strictly reviewed for their

- **originality,**
- **methodology,**
- **importance,**
- **quality,**
- **ethical nature and**
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The Balkan Medical Journal uses a well-constructed scheme for the evaluation process. (Please refer to "Instructions to Author" page for more information).

Overall, the acceptance rate of the Balkan Medical Journal is between 10% and 15%, and the median response time for all submissions is 3 weeks (2 weeks for rejected papers, and for accepted papers, 5 weeks for the first revision request by the external reviewers). The median overall response time for accepted papers is 13 weeks because the editors and reviewers of the Balkan Medical Journal usually need to assist authors to improve their papers through several revisions to increase the quality of the articles published in the journal.

The entire submission process for a manuscript is completed online through the self-explanatory online submission system through the following website: <http://mc04.manuscriptcentral.com/balkanmedj>. The reviewers can also reach their personal pages from the same address with their own passwords.

Manuscripts that comply with the main rules of the journal are sent to at least two external reviewers, and the reviewers are asked for their opinion about the suitability of the paper for publication. The reviewed manuscripts are then re-reviewed by the Editor in Chief and the Editorial Board and a decision of rejection or acceptance is shaped.

If the reviewers have **any potential competing interests**, they must notify the editor before agreeing to review a submission.

The Balkan Medical Journal is committed to the highest standards of **research and publication ethics**. Editors will act in accordance with the relevant international rules of publication ethics (i.e., COPE guidelines, WAME resources, WMA policies and ORI) if any ethical misconduct is suspected. The Editorial Board of the Balkan Medical Journal encourages reviewers to comment on possible research or publication misconduct such as unethical research design, duplication, plagiarism, etc. Plagiarism is a serious problem and the most common ethical issue afflicting medical writing. The Balkan Medical Journal does not allow any form of plagiarism. In accordance with our journal policy, submitted manuscripts are screened with plagiarism software to detect instances of overlapping and similar text (iThenticate and others) at least two times (during the evaluation process and after acceptance). If the reviewers have any suspect, the editors can provide them information obtained by plagiarism screening tools.

An approval of research protocols by an ethics committee in accordance with international agreements ("WMA



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Declaration of Helsinki - Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (last updated: October 2013, Fortaleza, Brazil)", "Guide for the care and use of laboratory animals (8th edition, 2011)" and/or "International Guiding Principles for Biomedical Research Involving Animals (2012)" is required for all experimental and clinical and drug trial studies. For articles concerning experimental research on humans, a statement should be included that shows informed consent of patients and volunteers was obtained following a detailed explanation of the procedures that they may undergo. Informed consent must also be obtained for case reports. All recognizable photographs of a patient must be accompanied by written permission from the patient for reproduction. Procedures that were performed to eliminate any pain, harm and distress in subjects/animals should clearly be stated. The authors should clearly state their compliance with internationally accepted guidelines and the guidelines issued by the relevant authority of their country. *The journal* requests a copy of the Ethics Committee Approval received from the relevant authority.

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7. Are the methods described comprehensively?
8. Is the results section clear and satisfactory?
9. Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the results?
10. Is adequate and current reference made to other work in the field?
11. Is the language acceptable?
12. Please rate the priority for publishing this article (1 is the highest priority, 10 is the lowest priority).
13. Is the appropriate terminology used in the text?
14. Is it sufficient that figures and/or tables?
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