

Occupational Health Southern Africa: a journal for the region and beyond

This paper was presented at the ICOH2018 Congress in Dublin, Ireland.

INTRODUCTION

Occupational Health Southern Africa is the only occupational health journal in southern Africa. The Journal publishes peer-reviewed original research articles and is accredited by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training. The Journal, which is published bi-monthly (six issues per year), is run by one Editor-in-Chief, one Assistant Editor, eight Editorial Board members representing the four occupational health societies, viz. The South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM), the Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH), the South African Society of Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (SASOHN), and the Mine Medical Professionals Association (MMPA). Publication and technical aspects are supported by Mettamedia. Together, the team strives to keep occupational health practitioners (doctors, nurses, hygienists and others) informed about current local research, views of experts, and developments in occupational health (including occupational medicine and occupational hygiene), and to provide a publishing platform for both novice and experienced researchers in the region.

In order to increase the reach of the Journal and to encourage researchers in the region to contribute by submitting scientific papers for publication and/or reviewing submitted papers, it was necessary to identify the sources of published and rejected papers by country of origin and institution type, and to identify the countries where the reviewers reside.

METHODS

The contents of the 36 issues of the Journal from 2012 to 2017 were categorized by the type of paper published, viz. original research, issues in occupational health, back to basics, opinion, review or case report. The countries of origin of the first and co-authors, the affiliations of the author(s) (university, government organisation, etc.) were also assessed. Papers that were rejected in the six-year period were analysed using the same metrics.

RESULTS

The majority of papers published were by authors from South Africa (Table 1), less than 20% of published papers were by authors outside of South Africa, and 5% of published papers were sent from outside of Africa. The only southern African countries from where papers were published were Botswana, Zambia, Swaziland and Zambia.

In the six-year period, only 17 papers were rejected (Table 2). Most of these papers (70.6%) were from South Africa. There was no discrepancy with regard to country of origin for rejected papers.

In the six years under review, 52.4% of the reviewers were from South Africa, followed by 44.6% outside Africa (Table 3). There were only 8 (3%) reviewers from African countries outside of South Africa.

Table 1. Summary of published papers (2012-2017)

Type	Total		Non-SA		Non-SA country: n ²		
	n	%	n	%			
Original research ¹	68	58.1	13	19.2	Multiple: 1	Botswana: 1	Nigeria: 1
					UK: 2	Cote d'Ivoire: 2	Tanzania: 1
					Australia: 2	Ethiopia: 1	Zambia: 1
					Canada: 1		
Issues in OH	15	12.8	3	20.0	Multiple: 3		
Back to basics ¹	12	10.3					
Opinion	11	9.4	2	18.2	Swaziland: 2		
Review ¹	7	6.0					
Case report ¹	4	3.4	2	50.0	Zambia: 2	Zimbabwe: 2	
Total	117		20	17.1			

¹ all peer-reviewed by two reviewers; ² first or co-authors; n = number

DISCUSSION

Papers published in *Occupational Health Southern Africa* by authors from African countries other than South Africa are greatly underrepresented. There is a need to publicise the Journal more widely and encourage young researchers from the region to submit papers. This local journal is the ideal platform for students and novice researchers to disseminate their research results. In addition, more reviewers from Africa need to be identified and encouraged to participate in this academic activity.

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Table 2. Summary of rejected papers (2012-2017)

Country	n	%
SA	12	70.6
India	2	11.8
Cote d'Ivoire	2	11.8
Tunisia	1	5.9
Total	17	

Table 3. Summary of reviewers (2012-2017)

Year	S Africa		Africa		Eur	N Amer	Central/ S Amer	Asia	Scand	New Zealand/ Australia	Total International		Total
	n	%	n	%							n	n	
2012	20	40.0	3	6.0	10	7	1	5	2	2	27	54.0	50
2013	18	56.3	1	3.1	3	4	0	1	2	3	13	40.6	32
2014	25	49.0	1	2.0	6	5	2	1	2	9	25	49.0	51
2015	25	73.5	1	2.9	3	1	0	1	0	3	8	23.5	34
2016	36	69.2	1	1.9	1	12	1	0	0	1	15	28.8	52
2017	18	34.6	1	1.9	15	8	0	4	3	3	33	63.5	52
All	142	52.4	8	3.0	38	37	4	12	9	21	121	44.6	271

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