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## EDITORIAL

# Elsevier's new 'sponsored access' option

In recent years a practical and philosophical debate has raged in the world of academic publishing. The basic issues relate to the difference between what has been termed 'open access' publications and those to which subscription is required in order to access the full text of peer-reviewed articles, reports, reviews etc.

Subscription access to specific journals – or to a database such as ScienceDirect containing thousands of journals – is most usually via membership of organisations that subscribe to it – such as academic institutions and professional societies. Alternatively any published article can be purchased from Elsevier – either in print or downloaded. These are the ways in which publishers recoup the huge amount of overhead expenses associated with publishing – via direct purchase of articles, or via subscription.

Obviously the open-access model also requires that publishers cover their costs – and some open-access journals require payment by authors (or their affiliated organisations) to the publishers, before publication, while other open-access publications are subsidised by professional organisations.

For obvious reasons, open access has grown in popularity, and publishers such as Elsevier (publisher of JBMT) have sought ways in which to accommodate demands for wider access for potential readers who are not affiliated to subscribing organisations and institutions, or who find the individual cost of accessing/downloading articles, excessive – and 'sponsored access' offers a clear alternative.

From this month, authors of all articles published in Elsevier journals are offered a choice:

1. They can opt for the status quo, in which accepted articles, that have successfully negotiated the peer-review process, will continue to be published in professional journals, at no cost to the author(s), and will be abstracted as usual, and available in full to subscribers to the journal, or to the data base housing them (such as Elsevier's ScienceDirect).
2. Or, after an article has passed through the peer-review process, and has been accepted for publication, authors can opt to cover Elsevier's costs via a one-off payment (\$3000) – guaranteeing open access to that article.

That charge is necessary to offset publishing costs – which include managing article submission and peer review, typesetting, tagging and indexing of articles, hosting articles on dedicated servers, supporting sales and marketing costs to ensure global dissemination via ScienceDirect, as well as permanently preserving the published journal article.

The sponsored-access fee however excludes taxes and any potential author fees such as charges for publication of color images – which are additional if that option (colour) is chosen by authors.

The sponsored-access fee is waived for all National Institutes for Health (NIH) funded articles, allowing authors of such papers the potential to choose this option without charge.

Authors will be informed of these choices after they have received notification that their article has been accepted for publication, so reducing a potential conflict of interest where a journal would have a financial incentive to accept an article.

Authors who have had an article accepted, and who wish to sponsor their article in this way, so making it freely available to everyone, then complete and submit an order form.

There is however NO obligation to accept this sponsored-access option, which is neither urged nor encouraged by Elsevier/JBMT.

If the offer is ignored by the author(s), normal publication will continue, with placement of the resulting article in ScienceDirect in the usual way.

As we enter 2013, and the 17th year of JBMT publication, I wish to send sincere good wishes and thanks to all readers, reviewers and authors – and most importantly, to my associate editors and the Elsevier management and production team that have helped to make editing JBMT such a personal pleasure.

Leon Chaitow, ND DO, Editor-in-Chief,  
*School of Integrated Health, University of Westminster,*  
21, Siddons Lane, London NW15NF UK

Tel.: +44 20 7224 4220; fax: +44 20 7486 1241.  
E-mail addresses: [leonchaitow1@gmail.com](mailto:leonchaitow1@gmail.com),  
[leonchaitow1@mac.com](mailto:leonchaitow1@mac.com)