

Editorial

Open Access

Comparative Hepatology: A journal for all hepatologists with immediate Open Access to quality peer-reviewed research

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Published: 12 February 2004

Received: 20 January 2004

Comparative Hepatology 2004, **3**:1

Accepted: 12 February 2004

This article is available from: <http://www.comparative-hepatology.com/content/3/1/1>

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What is Comparative Hepatology?

Comparative Hepatology is an Open Access, peer-reviewed online journal for liver-oriented research, publishing basic and applied studies, in biology, veterinary and human medicine. The journal is published by BioMed Central.

The journal is a valuable reference forum for publication of quality original research on the normal or disrupted anatomy and physiology of the liver, including any of its supracellular, cellular or subcellular components. It considers articles that deal descriptively or experimentally with the liver. It also welcomes pathobiology studies. Translational research reports are encouraged and purely clinical hepatology is considered especially when it bears new insights on the structure and function of the liver. Multidisciplinary approaches (involving diverse expertise or organs) are welcomed, and articles are acceptable, subject to peer review, as long as the liver is a major focus of the study.

Comparative Hepatology is a unique journal in its field, allowing and encouraging publication of data from liver research spanning a wide range of scientific interests and species, as long as the results and conclusions are original and scientifically justified. The journal naturally brings together hepatologists with different views, expertise and particular interests.

Peer review policy

Publication of articles is dependent only on scientific validity, as judged by Editors and peer reviewers. At least two experts will review submitted manuscripts.

Key issues for peer reviewers are the methodological rigour, whether the work has flaws that should preclude publication, and whether the results are original and adequate to support the conclusions drawn.

Authors are requested to suggest peer reviewers; however, the Editors can choose referees other than, or in addition to, those suggested.

What Open Access really means for hepatologists?

Open Access normally applies only to research articles. *Comparative Hepatology* however, has taken this further, by making all of its articles Open Access.

Open Access changes the way in which articles are published. First, all accepted articles immediately become freely and universally accessible online, and so an author's work can be read by anyone at no cost. Second, the authors hold copyright for their work and grant anyone the right to reproduce and disseminate the article, provided that it is correctly cited and no errors are introduced [1]. Third, a copy of the full text of each article is permanently archived in an online repository separate from the journal. *Comparative Hepatology* articles are archived in PubMed Central [2], the US National Library of Medi-

cine's full-text repository of life science literature, and also in repositories at the University of Potsdam [3] in Germany, at INIST [4] in France and in e-Depot [5], the National Library of the Netherlands' digital archive of all electronic publications.

Article-processing charges and waivers

Article-processing charges (APCs) are needed to allow continued Open Access to *Comparative Hepatology* articles. Authors are asked to pay the equivalent to US\$525 if their article is accepted for publication. No charge is made for articles that are rejected after peer review. The Editor-in-Chief will consider waiver requests on a case-by-case basis. Discounts equivalent to US\$50 are available if authors submit their manuscript with references handled and formatted with recommended bibliographic software (Endnote 5/6 or Reference Manager 10).

Authors can circumvent the charge by getting their institution to become a 'member' of BioMed Central, whereby the annual membership fee covers the APCs for all authors at that institution for that year. This programme has been a success, and the number of members continues to increase, and include to this date more than 395 members in 32 countries. Current members include, for example, the NHS England, the World Health Organization, the US National Institutes of Health, Harvard, Princeton and Yale universities, and all UK universities [6]. Funding agencies have also realized the importance of Open Access publishing and have specified that their grants may be used directly to pay APCs [7].

A glance at our first year of publication

Launched in late August 2002, the journal has received submissions from Africa, Asia, Europe, and United States of America. From this pool, several manuscripts were found acceptable and were published. The articles fulfilled the journal's "comparative" aim, covering a wide range of species within a broad scope. Reviewers were chosen with utmost care. Our rejection rate was 29%. At least six indexed articles cited *Comparative Hepatology* articles, as currently seen in ISI Web of KnowledgeSM.

The Proceedings of the 11th International Symposium on the Cells of the Hepatic Sinusoids and their Relation to Other Cells, comprising 58 articles, were published as a supplement (January 14th). There was a delay in having them published because the manuscripts (including images) were not initially prepared for online publishing; a key aspect in electronic publishing. A relevant aspect was revealed by the fact that many errors in references would most likely pass unnoticed in a printed version – online linking of the majority of references to their PubMed citations avoided such errors appearing.

Speeding up publication, with a little help from the authors

From submission to publication in provisional but fully peer reviewed form, the shortest publication schedule for an original research article published in this journal was 2 months and 9 days [8]. Such a fast schedule, or shorter, is what authors might expect when strictly adhering to our simple submission instructions, and providing fast feedback to the Editorial requests. As pointed out by Wheatley and Grynszpan [9], for exceptionally good articles the mechanism is in place to achieve remarkable times from submission to publication; being technically possible to publish within a day.

Why choose *Comparative Hepatology* to publish your research?

To put it simply, there are good reasons for publishing in *Comparative Hepatology*, namely:

- electronic publishing with immediate free access for everybody
- unlimited space, with the possibility to publish additional material
- color illustrations at no extra cost
- fast and through peer review
- articles published immediately upon acceptance and soon after listed in PubMed
- authors and their peers are free to print out copies of their article, email it to colleagues, and post it on the web because of the BioMed Central copyright and license agreement.

In the coming years, we expect a steady increase in the number of submissions and publications. Authors and their Institutions have been increasingly supportive of the Open Access model as a viable and quite efficient way to disseminate the results of quality scientific research. The Institute of Scientific Information has already given impact factors for several BioMed Central journals. *Comparative Hepatology* will surely follow this way, supporting at the same time all BioMed Central efforts in the development and implementation of electronic tools that may allow authors to track and know the dissemination and impact of their particular Open Access article.

Why not submit your next liver-oriented research article to *Comparative Hepatology*? This option will simply assure that, if published, your work would be disseminated to the widest possible audience, given that there are no barriers to access. It has been shown that free online articles

are more highly cited because of their easier availability [10], thus promoting their real individual impact among peers and society. To speed up the process, manuscripts are submitted electronically, using the online submission system. Full details of how to submit a manuscript are given in our instructions for authors. Join or keep supporting the new era of electronic publishing and Open Access in hepatology.

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