



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## A case study in scholarly publishing: The first 100 days of *Open Clinical Annals*, a platinum open access journal

Lucas Costa <sup>1,\*</sup> and Mary Big <sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Editor-in-Chief, Editorial Board, *Open Clinical Annals*, Belize and USA.

<sup>2</sup> Senior Editor, Editorial Board, *Open Clinical Annals*, Belize and USA.

<sup>3</sup> Member, Global Social Service Workforce Alliance

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### Abstract

Open Clinical Annals, an online medical/scientific journal, aims to disseminate well-conducted research at no cost to readers or authors. This case study explores its unique zero-cost operations model and analyzes its first 100 days, highlighting its novel approach and publications. Methodological outlines unveil strategic launch procedures, showcasing diverse publications and growing engagement metrics. Challenges ahead include sustaining the no-cost model and scaling operations. The journal seeks to gather more data to develop a proven model for Platinum Open Access publishing.

**Keywords:** Academic Publishing; Case Study; Information Dissemination; Peer Review; Open Access

### 1. Introduction

Open Clinical Annals, a Platinum Open Access Journal founded in 2024, aims to provide a platform for dissemination of well conducted research at no charge to readers or authors. While this approach is exceptionally rare in the realm of scholarly publishing, the journal further ventures into uncharted territory with its zero-cost of operations model [1,2].

This case study outlines the journal's initial 100 days of operation, focusing on its unprecedented no-cost strategy and the publications it has attracted during this period.

In the methods section, the strategy undertaken to launch and run the journal throughout its first 100 days of existence is outlined.

In the results section, we provide insightful data on submission rates, showcasing the level of interest and engagement from authors, as well as website traffic and social media metrics, indicating the extent of readership and dissemination of published content. Additionally, we present overview of the publications generated by Open Clinical Annals during its initial 100 days of operation.

### 2. Materials and method

Open Clinical Annals has devised a zero-cost model, ensuring free access for both authors and readers. This unique approach involves strategic measures to minimize expenses while maximizing impact. While acknowledging the limitations of this model, it is purposefully designed as a stepping stone for Open Clinical Annals, facilitating its

\* Corresponding author: Lucas Costa

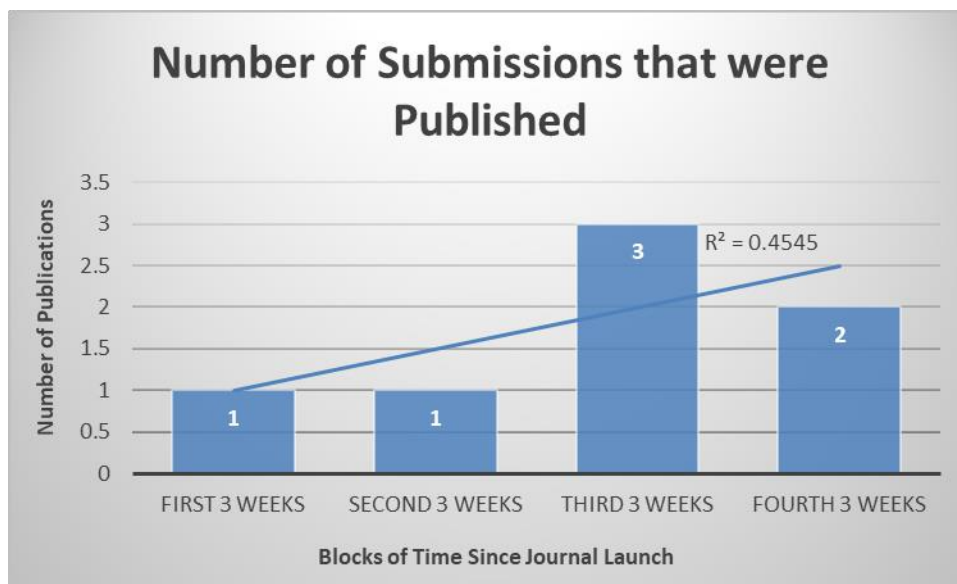
establishment, garnering interest from both authors and readers, and laying the groundwork for future expansion and development.

- **Strategic Partnerships:** In lieu of traditional grants and sponsorships, the journal utilizes free repository services to provide DOI permanence to articles. Additionally, free online website hosting services are utilized to keep operational costs at a minimum. Similar to most other journals, our peer review pool is also completely volunteer.
- **Social Media Presence:** To generate awareness and interest in reading the journal, submitting articles, and peer reviewing, *Open Clinical Annals* established a social media presence. The journal disseminates updates, highlights new publications, engages with various scientific and medical communities—all at zero cost. During the first 6 weeks of operations, social media posts were done in bursts, with heavy posting on even number weeks and minimal to no posting on odd number weeks. After 6 weeks, the posting schedule was modified to have a more constant and steady stream of social media posts. The journal also provides published authors with a social media promotion kit, which is an image highlighting the new publication.
- **Completely Volunteer Run:** A small (<5 people) team of editors and support staff volunteers their time and expertise to ensure the quality and efficiency of the publication process, handling everything from the editorial and admin work to marketing and strategic planning.

### 3. Results

Via social media analytics, our campaigns have generated over 150,000 impressions. This has resulted in the formation of a peer review pool of 21 members and 11 article submissions.

The journal officially launched February 7, 2024 with a social media campaign prompting people to submit and join the peer review group. 10 days later it received its first submission, a case report that went on to be published [3]. The next accepted submission came in about 2 weeks later, followed by about a month of 0 submissions. Then, there was an increase in the first 2 weeks of April, with 4 submissions during that period being published. The most recently published article was submitted very early in May. During its inaugural 100 days, *Open Clinical Annals* published 7 of the 11 submissions representing a 64% acceptance rate in this time.



**Figure 1** Depicts a timeline of submissions that were published in the first 100 days

The articles published in *Open Clinical Annals* spanned various medical topics and disciplines. One publication explored applications of artificial intelligence and machine learning in neuroimaging decoding, while another explored the applications of this technology in patient satisfaction questionnaire development [4,5]. The case report outlines a unique reaction to a common drug, the clinical image article highlights cervical ferning on light microscopy, and another investigation explores the biomechanics of the pectoralis major. [3,6,7]. There have been 2 publications on trichology/hair restoration, including our most recent publication of an analysis of internet search trends in Bulgaria related to hair growth medications [8,9].

Most of the current peer review group (15/21) inquired about joining the team through the website or email, presumably directed to do so via social media. The rest of the peer review team joined after submitting an article to the journal. The peer review group was 8 strong at the time of the first article submission.

While this is certainly a small group, we attribute a large portion of the journals exceptionally fast submission to publication time (about 18 days) to the dedication of our highly motivated reviewers. The average time of initial peer review is 5.5 days, with an range of 12 hours to 14 days. There was only one instance in which a submission was so specialized that we were unable to provide peer review. In this case, after 2 weeks of attempting to find a peer reviewer, the author was informed that the journal was unable to review the paper due to inability to provide peer review for that specific project.

The journal's webservice provider provided basic site traffic analytics. In the first 14 weeks since launch, the journal webpage has had nearly 1,700 unique visitors. This has translated to over 2,200 total site visits in the first 14 weeks.



**Figure 2** Depicts the average daily unique visitors by week over the first 14 weeks of the journal's existence

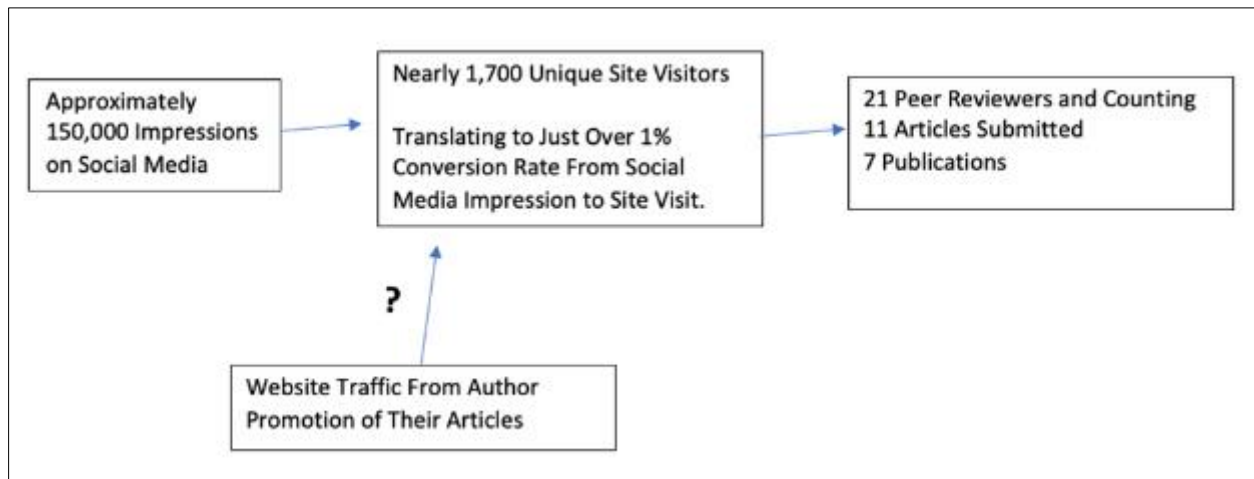
Another final noteworthy result to report is the feedback provided on 3 occasions by social media users, which expressed distrust of the journals motives. 1 social media user provided clarification, saying they were suspicious the journal may be a front to steal other's work.

#### 4. Discussion

The first 100 days of Open Clinical Annals (OCA) sheds light on both the successes and challenges of its novel approach to scholarly publishing.

The results of the first 100 days reveal promising indicators of engagement and interest in OCA. Social media campaigns have generated substantial impressions, resulting in a growing peer review pool and a commendable number of article submissions. The journal's rapid publication timeline, averaging approximately 18 days from submission to publication, attests to the dedication and efficiency of its reviewers. Additionally, website analytics demonstrate a notable level of traffic and engagement, potentially indicating both a growing readership and authorship base.

The noticeable fluctuations in daily unique visitors during the initial weeks, especially in the first four weeks, may be attributed to spikes in social media activity, as evidenced by the corresponding timelines.



**Figure 3** Flowchart Depicting Impact of the Journal's Launch and Promotional Strategy

In Figure 3, we offer our crude interpretation of the results stemming from our journal's overall promotion strategy. As authors were provided with a social media toolkit to enhance the visibility and promote their articles, it is difficult to estimate the impact of author-driven promotion on website activity

However, amidst these achievements, challenges have surfaced. For example, the expressions of distrust from some social media users were unexpected and concerning. While such instances are rare (3 total recorded by the journal), they were immediately addressed through improvements made to enhance the clarity and comprehensiveness of information on the journal homepage. Although this sentiment has not been expressed to the journal since these enhancements to the homepage, it still seems to be a stretch to think these changes alone would completely alleviate these sorts of concerns for all readers and authors.

In the longer term, expanded indexing may serve to mitigate skepticism, bolster credibility, and serve as a potent method for amplifying reach and impact. This aspiration, though particularly ambitious within the context of a zero-cost mindset, ultimately embodies the next step in ensuring the journal's success. Presently, we have initiated open applications with various indexes and are in the process of exploring measures to align our overarching methodology more closely with industry standards.

Moving forward, *Open Clinical Annals* aims to build upon its early successes and address ongoing challenges. Long-term goals include expanding indexing to further promote trust and exploring opportunities for author promotion to amplify the impact of published articles. A more comprehensive evaluation of the journal's promotional strategies will provide valuable insights for future endeavors.

The journal also sees an opportunity to boost engagement and involvement by expanding into a hub for conference publications across medical and healthcare fields. With an array of conferences covering diverse topics, this initiative aligns perfectly with our mission to disseminate research widely and freely [11,12]. By partnering with these conferences, we expand our reach without burdening authors or readers with costs [12]. This collaborative effort not only enriches our content but also amplifies our impact, fostering a vibrant community of researchers and readers united in advancing medical and healthcare knowledge.

Documentation of the journal's development and journey is anticipated to contribute significantly to the evolution of a model for publishing freely accessible content. By transparently sharing our experiences, successes, and challenges, we aim to provide valuable insights and lessons that can inform the development of similar initiatives in the future.

Our hope is that this, and future documentation, will serve as a resource for others seeking to establish sustainable models for open access publishing, ultimately fostering greater accessibility and dissemination of knowledge across diverse communities.

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## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the first 100 days of Open Clinical Annals reveal a blend of accomplishments and obstacles in its innovative approach to scholarly dissemination. Despite challenges such as sporadic expressions of skepticism, OCA has shown promising engagement levels through impactful social media campaigns and rapid article publication. Looking ahead, OCA aims to further bolster its credibility by expanding indexing and refining promotional strategies. By transparently documenting its journey, OCA aspires to not only navigate its own path to success but also serve as a beacon for others seeking to establish sustainable models for open access publishing, thereby advancing the accessibility and dissemination of knowledge on a broader scale.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosures and Conflicts of Interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

### *Statement of ethical approval*

This study was conducted in full adherence to ethical principles, despite not involving humans, animals, or any related data. The research was carried out with utmost integrity, honesty, and transparency, aligning with established ethical standards in scientific inquiry. All procedures and methodologies were implemented with the utmost respect for ethical guidelines, ensuring the reliability and validity of the study outcomes. Furthermore, the research team operated in good faith, upholding the principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice throughout the entirety of the study process.

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