

Medical publishing is broken

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The *Canadian Journal of Rural Medicine* was founded in 1996.

In that halcyon era, the pages were glossy, and advertisements gleamed in full colour between every article. Authors submitted their work on paper with an accompanying diskette. The journal itself was a bit thicker around the middle and published more articles. Furthermore, we could afford to mail the journal to anyone we thought could be a rural doctor, on the off chance that he or she might open the pages and read something that might inspire. After all, we were making money.

Today, times have changed. You are probably not reading this issue on paper. Advertisements are few, postage has gone up, cultural subsidies for Canadian publishing are gone ... and we, along with a large number of quality periodicals around the world, are losing money.

We hope you still find the pages inspiring, but we are mindful that the journal costs money. Where are we to get the money? For strategic reasons, we do not charge authors (yes, the emails asking you to submit papers are from “predatory” journals that will publish you ... for a fee). Many of our authors are first-timers and do not have a grant to offset this. We also do not want to charge readers. We want to

remain open access. The rural studies in our issues are not available elsewhere, and the data have policy implications. The findings should be a gift to the world, not a “gotcha” hiding behind a paywall.

Ultimately, the people paying for the journal right now are dues-paying members of the SRPC. That is sobering; we are spending your money. The august members of the editorial board have struggled with this, as we have had stellar service from our current publisher. On the other hand, costs are unpredictable year to year, except in that they are constantly increasing.

We have long done the sensible things. Our journal's print run is now very small, and we have moved the vast majority of subscribers online. But it is not enough. Our editorial board has formally undertaken the process to review our publishing options to ensure that the membership is getting good value for their dues.

We are shopping around for other options. We are asking for quotes from other medical publishers, both in Canada and around the world. In the past, making money and a quality publisher were enough to keep us satisfied. Now, times have changed, and staying with any particular publisher is no longer a given.