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A renewed journal to meet new challenges

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This is the last issue of the scientific journal of the Italian Society of Physiotherapy (SIF) that is published by Minerva Medica with the name of Italian Journal of Physiotherapy: in 2015, as the journal enters its 5th year of publication, it will undergo a radical change and will come out with a new name - Archives of Physiotherapy - a new publisher - BioMed Central – and a different type of publishing – open access journal. It is a real breakthrough that the Italian Society of Physiotherapy, owner of the journal, decided to undertake with the purpose of consolidating the journal, increasing its circulation, and attaining its indexing in other important international databases.

The choice has been dictated firstly by the desire of bringing the journal out of a merely national perspective. This desire explains the change of the journal name. The new name does not contain references to a single country or to a particular geographical area even though the journal is primarily intended for researchers and physiotherapists working in Europe. Indeed, no English-language physiotherapy journals are currently being published in most of European countries, in South and East Europe in particular.¹ We believe that the Archives of Physiotherapy could gradually become the reference journal of physiotherapy associations, scientific societies, and/or universities in this area.

Though we have a long way to go in that direction yet, a first step has already been done: the Archives of Physiotherapy will be the offi-

cial journal of both the Italian Society of Physiotherapy and the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI). The cooperation of the latter institution has been decisive in this project and allowed to take the road of the new publication model, i.e. the full open access to all articles published in the journal. So far, the Italian Journal of Physiotherapy has employed a publication model that is used by many scientific journals: the journal contents were accessible only to SIF members and to those who paid for it, except for articles that were over one year old. Therefore, many potential readers never see the Italian Journal of Physiotherapy, or see them with a year late. This fact, along with the national perspective of the journal highlighted by the journal name itself, was in our opinion a strong limiting factor for the development and the diffusion of the journal.

There is an growing awareness that the traditional subscription model is unsatisfactory from many viewpoints, and most of publishers including Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford University Press, Springer, and, in Italy, Minerva Medica, introduced an hybrid open access option. In the last years the full open access model is spreading more and more and thousands of new full open access journal have been launched in the last decade. There is evidence that open access articles are more widely read² and are approaching the same scientific impact and quality as subscription journals, particularly in biomedicine.³ Ethical issues have been also invoked in

favour of more open approaches, including the promotion of public discussion and public deliberation.⁴

Among the core physiotherapy journals, however, only the Journal of Physiotherapy opted – recently: since January 2014 – for the full open access model. Indeed, the need of charging authors a substantial fee to publish with this model represents one major stumbling block that prevents physiotherapy journal to choose this option: contrary to what happens in other fields, in fact, physiotherapy researchers usually receive little or even no funding support for their investigations. The Journal of Physiotherapy overcame the obstacle thanks to a strategic plan of the Australian Physiotherapy Association that allowed the creation of an innovative model in which the journal content is free for readers and its publication is free for authors: a unique feature in the biomedical literature field.⁵

A unique feature, till now. Indeed, the Archives of Physiotherapy will have, in the first four years at least, the same model: the journal content will be free for readers but no fees will be requested to authors for publication. This condition is possible as a result of an economic support offered by a private person and of an agreement between the SIF and the SUPSI, that obtained financial support for the journal development from the Tim van der Laan Foundation. The agreement will be possibly extended in the future to other associations and institutions in order to consolidate the Archives of Physiotherapy among the core physiotherapy journals in this area. Coherently with this objective, several famous scholars in physiotherapy research have joined the Editorial Board of the journal.

The choice of an open access model, along with the involvement of the SUPSI in this project, forced us to change the journal publisher, i.e. to choose a publisher (BioMed Central) with a renowned expertise in this model. We want to emphasize that the choice of changing the publisher was not due to any disappointment with the work done in these years by Minerva Medica, with which the collaboration has been always fruitful and effective. We thank prof. Oliaro and all the staff of Minerva Medica for their valuable work, without which

we would have not the opportunity to develop the scientific journal of the SIF.

Our ambitious project also aims to influence the way in which physiotherapy is considered by the scientific communities of countries, where it still does not have the credit it surely deserves. No doubt that one of such countries is Italy, as the recent results of the national qualification for becoming university professors have clearly shown. We have demonstrated that no scientific or cultural reasons may be claimed to explain those results, and our criticism has been recently published also on a geriatrics medical journal.⁶ After the publication of our first article on this event,⁷ we asked physiotherapists who are involved in the Academia all around the world for a comment on this issue. In details, we asked them to state 1) their personal involvement in scientific and educational activities, 2) the type of involvement of physiotherapists in the university system of their Country, and 3) their opinion on the advantages that the presence of academics physiotherapists could bring both to the formation of the students and to patient care. In this last issue of the Italian Journal of Physiotherapy we publish the letters come so far from these researchers.

We are confident that the success of the Archives of Physiotherapy, if any, will also contribute to change this state of affairs of the Italian Academia.

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