

WHO open-access policy: frequently asked questions for recipients of WHO funding

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Background

What is open access?

Open access is the name given to the process of providing free online access to and unrestricted reuse of digital content. In the case of research, open access typically means providing online, free availability to research papers without restrictions on use, which are commonly imposed by publisher copyright agreements. Open-access publishing describes the publication of a peer-reviewed article on the internet without any requirement for readers to pay a fee to read it, i.e. free access. In addition, the right to reuse the article is subject to a special type of open licence (usually a Creative Commons licence) that grants the reader the right to reuse all or parts of it without having to seek additional permission, subject to appropriate attribution of the original source.

Why does WHO have a policy on open access?

WHO has introduced an open-access policy in order to improve access to information, which is a fundamental part of its mission. Open-access policies have also become increasingly common in the area of research and have been largely adopted by research funders and universities, many of whom support the work of WHO. The WHO policy is in line with those of other research funders.

Scope and requirements of the WHO open-access policy

What is WHO's policy on open access?

The WHO policy on open access can be accessed at <http://www.who.int/about/policy/en/>.

What types of information does WHO's open-access policy apply to?

WHO's open-access policy applies to:

- original research or review journal articles or book chapters that are produced by individuals or institutions who are funded in whole or in part by WHO and that are not published by WHO;
- original research or review journal articles or book chapters that are co-authored by WHO staff and that are not published by WHO;
- WHO publications.

It does not apply to editorials and conference proceedings.

The policy came into force on 1 July 2014. On 11 November 2016, it was extended to include WHO publications.

What are the requirements of the policy?

From 1 July 2014, journal articles or book chapters produced by individuals or institutions who are funded in whole or in part by WHO must be published in one of the following ways (see Table 1):

1. in an open-access journal (such as those published by BioMed Central, Hindawi and PLoS);
2. in a subscription journal that offers a hybrid open-access fee option (most subscription journals now offer the option for authors to pay a fee to ensure that their articles are openly accessible);
3. in a subscription journal that allows authors to deposit the accepted author manuscript in Europe PubMed Central within 12 months of the date of publication.

If authors select options 1 or 2, an article processing charge may be payable to the publisher. In such cases, the article or chapter must:

- be made freely available in Europe PubMed Central on the date of publication;
- be published under a Creative Commons Attribution licence ([CC BY 3.0](#));
- be deposited in PubMed Central or Europe PubMed Central by the publisher, in XML.

If authors select option 3, then the principal investigator must self-archive the accepted author manuscript in Europe PubMed Central. (In some cases, publishers may offer an option to deposit the manuscript on behalf of the author.)

External entities applying for project support from WHO should include the article processing charges, where appropriate, in their applications.

Table 1. Summary of the open-access policy options and requirements

Option	Fees	Public access	Reuse	PubMed Central
1. Open-access journal	Article processing charge paid by authors. Waivers are usually available for authors in developing countries. Some open-access journals do not require the payment of article processing charges	Immediate public access on the date of publication on the publisher's website	Authors should select the CC BY 3.0 licence to ensure unrestricted reuse	Publisher deposits XML version of the article and metadata in PubMed Central , which automatically appear in Europe PubMed Central

Option	Fees	Public access	Reuse	PubMed Central
2. Subscription journal with hybrid open-access fee option	Article processing charge paid by authors. Waivers are usually available for authors in developing countries	Immediate public access on the date of publication on the publisher's website	Authors should select the CC BY 3.0 licence to ensure unrestricted reuse	Publisher deposits XML version of the article and metadata in PubMed Central, which automatically appear in Europe PubMed Central
3. Subscription journal	No cost to authors	Restricted to subscribers until the end of the embargo period (up to 12 months)	Restricted, i.e. permission is required from the publisher to reuse figures, tables, etc.	Authors must self-archive the accepted author manuscript after acceptance for publication in Europe PubMed Central, and set an embargo of up to a maximum of 12 months after the date of publication. In some cases, publishers may offer an option to deposit the accepted author manuscript on behalf of the author

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WHO publications are accessible through the Institutional Repository for Information Sharing (IRIS; <http://apps.who.int/iris/>).

WHO publications published prior to 2017 will not be reissued under the CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence; however, WHO will continue to encourage their reuse for non-commercial educational and research purposes.

Does the WHO open-access policy apply to my work?

If you have received any funding from WHO headquarters, a WHO regional or country office, or a special programme or partnership hosted by WHO¹ since 1 July 2014, then you are required to comply with the terms of the WHO open-access policy. However, everyone is encouraged to make their work open access, regardless of when the work was funded or published if they are able to do so.

Does the policy apply to related research data?

The policy does not apply to related research, data, editorials or conference proceedings (see What types of information does WHO's open-access policy apply to?). WHO encourages, where possible, any research data relating to WHO-funded work that is published in peer-reviewed journals, to be made publicly accessible.

If a publisher offers an open-access option, am I required to select this option?

If a publisher offers an open-access option, you are not required to select this. If the subscription journal allows authors to deposit the accepted author manuscript in Europe PMC within 12 months of the date of publication, then this is acceptable.

Open-access repositories

What are open-access repositories?

As open-access publications are in digital form, they need to be preserved in special electronic archives or repositories. These repositories are online versions of paper-based libraries and are used for the storage of digital materials in appropriate formats to ensure the continuity and preservation of scientific records. A well-known example of a publicly accessible repository is PubMed Central.

WHO has established the Institutional Repository for Information Sharing (IRIS) to ensure the safe storage of its digital materials. In addition, WHO has recently started using another global repository, Europe PubMed Central, for the archiving of work produced under the Organization's open-access policy (see What is Europe PubMed Central?).

What is PubMed Central?

PubMed Central is an archive of biomedical and life science literature operated by a division of the United States National Library of Medicine (NLM), the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI). Access to PubMed Central is free and unrestricted via the internet.

¹ WHO-hosted special programmes include the UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction and the UNICEF/UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases. WHO-hosted partnerships include the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, the Global Health Workforce Alliance, the Global Malaria Programme, Human Resources for Health, Stop TB, the Tobacco Free Initiative and the World Alliance for Patient Safety Programme.

What is Europe PubMed Central?

Europe PubMed Central is a European version of PubMed Central that was established by a group of European biomedical funders (the Europe PMC Funders' Group). WHO joined Europe PMC in May 2014. Europe PubMed Central is a stable, permanent and free-to-access digital archive of the full text, peer-reviewed research publications (and datasets) that arise from research funded by members of the Group. For further information, see <http://europepmc.org/Funders/>.

Depositing your manuscript in Europe PubMed Central

Who is responsible for depositing the published article into Europe PubMed Central?

Many journals have an automatic process for depositing research papers into PubMed (see What are the requirements of the policy?). If you have chosen to publish your paper in an open-access journal or in a subscription journal using the hybrid open-access option, it will automatically be available in PubMed Central and Europe PubMed Central.

Who is responsible for depositing the accepted author manuscript into Europe PubMed Central?

The principal investigators who publish under option 3 (see What are the requirements of the policy?) are responsible for depositing the accepted author manuscript in Europe PubMed Central. WHO will make every effort to provide grant data, so that Europe PubMed Central can list grants under principal investigators' existing accounts or create new accounts.

When should the manuscript be deposited? What if the publisher enforces an embargo?

The author-approved manuscript should be deposited as soon as possible after acceptance for publication. The manuscript will not be made publicly accessible until after the expiration of the embargo period (maximum 12 months).

How do I deposit my manuscript into Europe PubMed Central?

To deposit your accepted manuscript into Europe PubMed Central, you need to [log in](#) to your account.

What is my grant ID?

For grants issued after 1 July 2014, your grant ID will be provided in the contract issued by WHO. If you do not have a grant ID, please contact the WHO funding entity that funded your research.

Types of contract used by WHO include:

- Technical Services Agreements
- Grant Letters of Agreement.

How do I deposit book chapters?

To deposit book chapters, please contact openaccess@who.int. Please provide the following information:

- WHO grant number or grant-holder name
- the entity within WHO that funded your work
- title of the book in which the chapter will be published
- publisher name
- embargo release date, if applicable.

What if my journal is not indexed in PubMed?

PubMed Central has a [journal-matching feature](#) to help you locate the journal that has accepted your manuscript for publication. If your journal is not indexed in PubMed, please contact openaccess@who.int.

Which files should I include when archiving my manuscript?

When archiving your manuscript, you should include all the related files: the main text, figures, tables, annexes and supplementary files.

What file types are accepted in PubMed Central?

A variety of [file types](#) are accepted in PubMed Central.

Am I eligible for a waiver or a discounted article processing charge?

If you are a corresponding author and you are based in a country that meets the [eligibility criteria for Hinari](#), you should request a waiver or reduction of the article processing charge. Many publishers offer waivers and discounts to authors in developing countries. Other publishers consider requests on a case-by-case basis.

If there are multiple funders and authors involved in the project, who should pay the article processing charge?

If there is more than one funder involved, the fee should be negotiated among the different funders. If there are multiple authors involved, the open-access fee needs to be negotiated between the collaborators themselves, ideally before any paper is written. If the principal investigator and/or lead author is from a developing country, the journal may offer a waiver (see Am I eligible for a waiver or a discounted article processing charge?).

What should I do if the journal I selected does not have an open-access option or allow me to self-archive the accepted manuscript in Europe PubMed Central?

If your chosen journal does not have an open-access option or allow you to self-archive the accepted manuscript, you should not publish in that journal, as you will not be able to comply with the WHO policy on open access or those of many of the other research funders.

What happens if research papers are not published in compliance with the WHO open-access policy?

Providing open access to research papers is becoming increasingly accepted in the area of research and many funders now have an open-access policy as part of their terms and

conditions. Compliance with the WHO open-access policy will be taken into account in making future decisions on funding allocations.

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The author of a work that is licensed under a Creative Commons licence usually retains copyright in the work.

How do Creative Commons licences work?

Creative Commons licences are straightforward to use. They are easy to identify because each licence has a small visual identifier (see What are the different types of Creative Commons licences?). Each licence consists of: an easy-to-understand summary of how the work may be used; the licence agreement; and a machine-readable summary that software systems, search engines and other kinds of technology can understand.

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WHO publications are published under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Intergovernmental Organization ([CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO](#)) licence.

Whom can I contact for more information or help?

For further information, please contact openaccess@who.int.