

EDITORIAL – The impact of a global pandemic on journal submissions

The Covid-19 pandemic has hugely impacted our professional and personal lives over the last 13 months. Government policies designed to reduce spread of the virus has led to many of us leaving our workplace in order to work from home. Whilst this has brought many benefits to some, it has brought considerable pitfalls to others. Amongst the multiple effects Covid has had on the world, a particular impact has been seen in academia; the reduction in the number of submissions to journals has been reported widely, especially from women. The AJPP is one of the many journals reporting a decreased number of submissions over the past year.

Interestingly, it has been reported that the restrictions and lockdowns have led to an increase in some journal submissions as, for some, working from home has allowed more time to be spent working on publications. It has been suggested anecdotally that scientists have replaced their time spent in the laboratory with time spent in front of a computer writing papers. Submissions in medical journals have also increased due to the emerging of information about the Covid-19 virus, subsequent clinical findings and developing management options.

In contrast, submissions to other journals have not been so abundant. Education provision has changed considerably over the last year with social distancing measures forcing the majority of teaching sessions to be delivered remotely. This transition from face to face to virtual online teaching has created a barrier for some tutors and tutees, impacting on the delivery of education. The pandemic has also been problematic for those involved in research due to reduced access to resources and limited travel for field research or conferences. These factors, amongst other restrictions, have been troublesome for the world of academia. In addition, sources suggest that the gap between male and female journal submissions has widened. It seems likely that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the gender disparity in the home. Historically, females have had a more dominant role with regards to childcare and other caring responsibilities and household tasks, compared to males. Pre-pandemic, female academics reported spending 8.5 more hours per week on domestic and childcare responsibilities than their partners and were more likely to take time off work for childcare related reasons. National lockdowns involving the closing of schools and childcare facilities has led to conflicting duties of many working parents. Time spent on home-schooling and other primary care-giving responsibilities has had to compete with time spent on academic and professional work. These parenting duties are reportedly most likely to fall into the hands of females, which is why this has likely impacted upon journal submissions of all kinds, but particularly from women.

Now that the national Covid-19 vaccination programme is in operation in the UK, infection numbers are dropping and government restrictions are easing, it is hoped that day-to-day life for everyone is transitioning back to normality. However, with the number of virus mutations appearing across the globe, it is not the time for complacency and normality may be somewhat out of reach as yet. With workplaces and schools reopening, we have seen an increase in the number of expressions of interest to submit to AJPP and are hopeful that 2021 will see the publication of two issues, including a special edition which will focus on equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI). Authors are invited to submit to the special issue, and papers focusing on the impact of the global pandemic on women in academia are particularly encouraged.

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: KATE DART