

Editorial

Consolidating Editorial Quality, Transparency, and International Visibility in Rehabilitation Medicine: A New Developmental Stage for Balneo and PRM Research Journal

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Abstract: Scientific journals in physical and rehabilitation medicine operate in an increasingly demanding editorial environment, where clinical relevance, methodological rigor, publication ethics, transparency, metadata quality, and long-term citability are evaluated together. In this context, *Balneo and PRM Research Journal* enters a new developmental stage focused on strengthening editorial governance, improving production procedures, harmonizing open-access policies, reinforcing peer-review standards, and increasing the international visibility of published research. This editorial outlines the journal's current transformation strategy, with emphasis on scientific quality, structured editorial workflows, consistency of publication metadata, responsible open-access licensing, ethical alignment with international best practices, and the prioritization of articles with strong clinical, methodological, and translational value. These actions reflect an adaptive institutional effort to consolidate the journal's role as a specialized platform for rehabilitation medicine, balneology, physical medicine, functional assessment, clinical recovery, and interdisciplinary health sciences.

Keywords: editorial policy; rehabilitation medicine; publication ethics; open access; peer review; indexing; scientific quality; journal development; metadata; transparency.

The scientific publishing landscape has changed substantially during the last decade. Journals are no longer evaluated only through the number of articles they publish, the continuity of publication, or the presence of peer review. Contemporary journal assessment increasingly integrates multiple dimensions: scientific originality, methodological quality, ethical governance, transparency of editorial procedures, consistency of licensing policies, correctness of metadata, international diversity, citation potential, digital discoverability, and the reliability of production workflows. For journals in physical and rehabilitation medicine, these expectations are particularly important because the field itself is interdisciplinary, clinically applied, and closely connected to public health, disability prevention, functional recovery, long-term care, and quality of life.

In this context, *Balneo and PRM Research Journal* is entering a new phase of editorial consolidation. The journal's mission remains focused on physical and rehabilitation medicine, balneology, neurorehabilitation, musculoskeletal recovery, cardiopulmonary rehabilitation, sports medicine, therapeutic exercise, functional assessment, and related biomedical sciences. However, the operational framework supporting this mission is being refined. The objective is not merely to publish a larger number of manuscripts, but to

publish articles that are more coherent, more transparent, more methodologically defensible, more internationally visible, and more useful for clinicians, researchers, and academic institutions.

A first direction of transformation concerns editorial standardization. Scientific quality is strongly influenced by the consistency of the editorial process. Therefore, the journal is implementing stricter internal checks for article type classification, manuscript structure, title accuracy, ethical declarations, authorship statements, funding information, conflict-of-interest disclosures, data availability statements, and supplementary materials. These elements may appear technical, but they are essential markers of editorial reliability. A research article must be clearly distinguishable from a review article, a case report, a systematic review, a bibliometric analysis, or a methodological framework. Each article category requires a specific reporting logic, and the journal will increasingly apply this principle before publication.

A second priority concerns the strengthening of peer-review transparency and editorial accountability. Peer review remains the foundation of scientific publishing, but it must be supported by clear procedures. The journal is refining its reviewer selection, editorial decision pathways, manuscript revision tracking, and final pre-publication assessment. Particular attention will be paid to the distinction between scientific peer review and production-stage editorial correction. Peer review addresses the validity, relevance, and originality of scientific content, whereas production review ensures consistency, metadata accuracy, correct licensing, complete declarations, and absence of residual template elements. Both stages are necessary, but they serve different purposes.

The journal is also introducing a more systematic pre-publication quality-control procedure. Before final publication, each manuscript will undergo verification for article category, ethical statements, author affiliations, correspondence details, DOI structure, final pagination, licensing statement, reference completeness, figure quality, table readability, and consistency between the article PDF and the journal website. This measure is particularly important because production quality has become a visible indicator of editorial professionalism. A scientifically valuable article may lose credibility if its final version contains inconsistent metadata, outdated information, contradictory licensing, incomplete declarations, or uncorrected template text. For this reason, production quality is now treated as part of scientific communication, not as a secondary technical step.

A major component of the journal's current transformation concerns open-access policy. Open access is not limited to free online availability. It also involves clarity regarding copyright, reuse, licensing, archiving, and long-term accessibility. The journal is moving toward greater consistency in the way licensing information is presented across article PDFs, article webpages, author instructions, copyright statements, and metadata deposits. A single, clearly stated open-access license applied consistently to newly published articles will improve transparency for authors, readers, indexing services, libraries, and repositories. This harmonization is essential for avoiding ambiguity and for strengthening the journal's alignment with contemporary open-science practices.

The journal recognizes that metadata quality is a central component of modern discoverability. Article titles, abstracts, keywords, author names, ORCID identifiers, affiliations,

references, DOI metadata, licensing information, article type, funding statements, and indexing descriptors all influence how research is found, cited, stored, and evaluated. For this reason, metadata correction and harmonization are becoming part of the editorial workflow. The journal will place greater emphasis on accurate article titles, standardized keywords, complete affiliations, validated references, consistent DOI presentation, and machine-readable publication information wherever possible.

Scientific selectivity is another important part of the journal's development. The field of rehabilitation medicine includes a wide range of article types, from randomized controlled trials and prospective clinical studies to observational research, narrative reviews, systematic reviews, bibliometric analyses, case reports, and conceptual frameworks. Each type has value, but each must be positioned appropriately. The journal will increasingly prioritize manuscripts that provide robust methodology, clear clinical applicability, transparent limitations, international relevance, and potential for citation. Review articles will be evaluated not only for thematic relevance but also for synthesis quality. Original research will be assessed for design clarity, statistical appropriateness, ethical approval, and clinical meaning. Case reports will be published when they provide genuine educational value, rare pathology, innovative rehabilitation management, or important diagnostic lessons.

The current issue reflects this strategic orientation. It includes studies addressing intra-articular therapies for osteoarthritis, early intensive-care rehabilitation, pediatric electrocardiographic parameters, neurorehabilitation, musculoskeletal recovery, sports medicine, digital health, artificial intelligence, postural assessment, balneotherapy, and functional outcomes. This thematic diversity is not accidental. It reflects the broad scope of modern rehabilitation medicine, where functional recovery is increasingly linked to technology, imaging, biomarkers, personalized treatment, preventive strategies, and interdisciplinary care pathways. The journal aims to serve as a meeting point for these domains while maintaining a coherent identity within physical and rehabilitation medicine.

At the same time, the journal recognizes the need to avoid excessive heterogeneity. International visibility requires thematic breadth, but also editorial coherence. For this reason, future issues will increasingly organize content into recognizable sections such as systematic reviews and meta-analyses, clinical rehabilitation studies, digital and technological rehabilitation, balneology and thermal medicine, neurorehabilitation, musculoskeletal rehabilitation, pediatric rehabilitation, sports and return-to-play medicine, functional assessment, and case-based clinical education. Such structuring will help readers navigate the journal more easily and will strengthen the journal's profile in bibliographic databases.

The journal's development strategy also includes a stronger emphasis on reporting guidelines. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses should follow PRISMA principles. Randomized trials should be aligned with CONSORT. Observational studies should follow STROBE. Diagnostic accuracy studies should consider STARD. Case reports should be structured according to CARE principles. Qualitative studies, bibliometric analyses, and mixed-methods research should also use appropriate reporting frameworks. The aim

is not to impose unnecessary formalism, but to increase transparency, reproducibility, and international comparability.

Ethical governance will remain central. Studies involving patients, clinical data, biological samples, rehabilitation interventions, or vulnerable populations must include clear ethical approval or a justified statement of exemption. Retrospective studies must explain consent procedures or waiver conditions. Case reports must protect privacy and obtain appropriate consent where necessary. Clinical trials should provide registration information whenever applicable. Authorship contributions should be explicit, conflicts of interest must be declared, and funding information must be transparent. These are not administrative details; they are part of scientific integrity.

The journal also acknowledges the increasing importance of interdisciplinary research. Rehabilitation medicine is no longer limited to post-acute functional recovery. It now includes preventive rehabilitation, chronic disease management, digital monitoring, wearable technologies, artificial intelligence, exercise physiology, health psychology, quality-of-life assessment, occupational reintegration, and patient-centred outcomes. This evolution creates opportunities for broader international collaboration and higher citation impact. The journal intends to support such development while preserving its core identity in rehabilitation, balneology, and physical medicine.

An important objective for the coming period is the improvement of international authorship and readership. The journal will continue to encourage submissions from Romania and the broader regional academic community, but it will also seek greater participation from international researchers. Increased geographic diversity among authors, reviewers, editorial board members, and cited literature will strengthen the journal's visibility and scientific relevance. Internationalization must be organic and quality-driven, based on meaningful collaboration and rigorous editorial standards.

The journal's adaptive effort also includes improving the balance between quantity and quality. In a competitive publishing environment, maintaining regular publication is important, but excessive volume without adequate quality control can weaken a journal's profile. The editorial strategy will therefore place greater emphasis on selecting manuscripts with clear scientific contribution, ensuring rigorous pre-publication review, and avoiding avoidable production errors. Each published article contributes to the cumulative reputation of the journal.

Another essential goal is citation development. Citation performance depends not only on article quality but also on topic selection, indexing visibility, abstract clarity, keyword accuracy, reference integration, international relevance, and post-publication discoverability. Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, consensus-oriented articles, clinical trials, methodological papers, and articles addressing emerging technologies often have greater citation potential. The journal will therefore encourage submissions in these categories while maintaining space for clinically meaningful observational studies and educational case reports.

The digital identity of the journal will also be strengthened. A modern journal must provide accurate, accessible, and consistent information across all online pages. Author instructions, peer-review policy, open-access policy, copyright and licensing information,

publication fees, editorial board details, indexing information, archiving policy, and contact information must be updated, non-contradictory, and easy to verify. This consistency is now an essential part of journal credibility. The journal is therefore undertaking a systematic harmonization of its online editorial information.

The transformation currently underway should be understood as a process of editorial maturation. It is not a departure from the journal's identity, but a consolidation of it. *Balneo and PRM Research Journal* has long served a specialized academic community at the intersection of balneology, physical medicine, rehabilitation, and clinical recovery. The next stage is to express this identity through stronger editorial systems, clearer policies, improved article structure, higher production accuracy, and greater international visibility.

The journal is also establishing a clear policy regarding the responsible use of artificial intelligence in scholarly publishing. Artificial intelligence tools may assist authors in language refinement, technical editing, literature organization, data visualization, or preliminary analytical support, but they cannot replace scientific reasoning, clinical judgment, authorship responsibility, or peer review. AI tools must not be listed as authors, and all authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, integrity, interpretation, and transparency of the submitted work. When AI-assisted tools are used in manuscript preparation, their use should be disclosed in a dedicated statement, specifying the purpose and extent of assistance. Reviewers and editors must not upload confidential manuscripts, unpublished data, reviewer reports, or editorial correspondence into external AI systems unless explicitly authorized by the journal and compliant with confidentiality requirements. The journal may use AI-supported tools for editorial quality control, plagiarism screening, reference checking, language consistency, metadata verification, and production support, but final editorial decisions will always remain under human responsibility. This policy aims to support innovation while preserving accountability, confidentiality, research integrity, and trust in the scientific record.

This adaptive process requires coordinated work from editors, reviewers, authors, production staff, and institutional partners. Authors must provide complete and transparent manuscripts. Reviewers must assess both scientific relevance and methodological rigor. Editors must ensure coherence, fairness, and consistency. Production teams must guarantee that the final published record is accurate, stable, and professionally presented. The integrity of a journal is built through this collective process.

In conclusion, *Balneo and PRM Research Journal* is implementing a structured editorial development strategy focused on quality, transparency, consistency, ethical alignment, open-access clarity, metadata accuracy, and international relevance. These transformations are necessary for the journal's continued growth and for its positioning within the global landscape of rehabilitation medicine publishing. The journal's future depends not only on the scientific value of individual articles, but also on the reliability of the editorial system that supports them. By strengthening this system, the journal aims to provide a more robust platform for clinically relevant, methodologically sound, and internationally visible research in physical and rehabilitation medicine.