The impact of editorial policy

Roderick J McClure

Editorials throughout 2018 made explicit the journal’s editorial direction. In particular, we drew readers’ attention to the process of manuscript selection and the purpose selection was aiming to achieve. Rather than being a passive filtering process, editorial selection aims to encourage changes within the research world. At the year’s end, the journal was publishing ‘manuscripts of the highest quality that provided information of high relevance to prevention practice’, and hopefully changing the type and quality of research undertaken. Now, 18 months into the current editorial team’s lead-in period, let us take a look at the manuscripts published in this issue. Is the journal publishing the science that supports population-level changes in injury-related health?

Injury Prevention, volume 25, issue 4, contains a set of manuscripts drawn from the bank of in-press articles that have been longest in the queue. There are 17 manuscripts published in this issue: one descriptive epidemiology study method, five descriptive epidemiology full studies, two risk-factor epidemiology studies, four implementation studies, two implementation cost–benefit studies and a cost benefit systematic review, and two qualitative injury outcome studies. The issue is balanced across descriptive/risk-factor research and research focused on interventions that directly reduce injury harm.

The focus of the primary aims of the manuscripts in this issue is distributed across three settings: sport injuries (four), road transport injuries (two) and occupational injuries (two). Nine manuscripts were non-specific for setting. Of these nine manuscripts, the focus of the primary aims of five is distributed across four injury types: burns (two), bites (one), brain injury (one) and drug overdose (one). The remaining four manuscripts focus their primary aims on injury causes and include self-harm and violence (two), falls (one) and all-age all-cause (one). While many of these manuscripts could be classified under a number of these major headings, it is clear from the distribution of the manuscript primary aims that the issue is well distributed across the full injury prevention territory.

Are we meeting our expectations as an international journal? In volume 25, issue 4, there are manuscripts describing research conducted in Australia (one), Canada (one), Finland (one), Iran (one), New Zealand (one), South Africa (one), Sweden (one) and the USA (seven), with the remaining two manuscripts describing multinational research activity. Again the distribution looks promising.

For a measure of the usefulness of these manuscripts, we will have to wait and see. While it is not a comment on the likely citation counts for these specific manuscripts, it is interesting to note Clarivate’s recently released measure of the impact of Injury Prevention’s research, which shows a 25% increase over the previous year.

An examination of volume 25, issue 4, cannot support any claims about the success or otherwise of the journal’s current editorial direction. As a qualitative snapshot, this editorial tells just a story. Nonetheless, the examination has been an important exercise. This issue is essentially a random sample of what currently is being accepted for publication. Is the nature of the content an artefact of the selection or are we starting to see a shift in the focus of researcher activity? Are we getting it right?

Funding The authors have not declared a specific grant for this research from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing interests None declared.

Patient consent for publication Not required.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; internally peer reviewed.

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