

RCSI Student Medical Journal (RCSIsmj) Move to Open Access

Keywords: Research Communication

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Introduction

The RCSIsmj (Student Medical Journal) has been published annually since 2008, with the 17th edition published in April 2024. The journal provides a superb platform for RCSI's undergraduate students to highlight and publish their research at an early stage in their careers. It enhances understanding of how research can be translated from the bench to the patients' bedside, which in turn leads to better clinical care and best practice patient care. RCSI is supportive of Open Access – a publishing model for scholarly communication that makes research information readily available at no cost. This year the RCSIsmj moved to open access publication.

Initiative

The Journal began in 2008 with the Founding Editor, then a medical student, supported by the Head of the RCSI Department of General Practice & Family Medicine. It has since grown to include an Ethics Challenge; Case reports; Staff; Reviews, Articles and Narrative pieces. An important feature of the RCSIsmj is succession planning by students, providing an RCSIsmj institutional memory which has worked extremely well for the last 16 years. The launch of the new journal in March/April each year is eagerly anticipated by both staff and students and includes a reflective narrative piece and a very lively and enjoyable ethics debate.

A new initiative for the RCSIsmj was introduced this year. Following discussions (with the RCSI Library Team, the Deputy Vice Chancellor's Office and the RCSIsmj Editor-in-Chief and Senior Editor, and the publishing company), a CC BY-NC licence was added to the Journal. This licence grants public permission to share and adapt the articles in the RCSIsmj, so long as attribution is given to the creator and they are not used for commercial purposes. Following the addition of this licence, the Library Team uploaded all the RCSIsmj journal articles individually from 2008 to-date to the RCSI Repository – an open access repository for all RCSI publications, including undergraduate research https://repository.rcsi.com/Undergraduate_Research.

The individual articles from the RCSIsmj were allocated handles (unique identifiers) linked to authors which in turn will allow these to be added to CVs etc. The RCSI Repository ranks very highly in Google search results, so this will increase the visibility of RCSI's student authors, individual articles and the RCSIsmj itself. Student authors have been encouraged to add their handles to their email signature for further visibility of their articles.

Outcomes

The success of the RCSIsmj is a result of the skill, enthusiasm, and dedication of the student Executive Committee and the student Peer Reviewers Group. Over the years, the journal has had considerable support and encouragement from RCSI academic staff together with administrative support for the Deputy Vice Chancellor's Office – a true student and staff collaboration. The contribution of the Journal to RCSI's overall research profile and reputation has been invaluable. It is one of three publications (the other two being the University Annual Report and the RCSI Strategy) regularly presented with pride to many visiting guests. A new initiative of last year's journal was the inclusion of narrative pieces. One of these pieces written by the then Senior Editor, medical student, Stephen Clare, 'Doing things by halves' was subsequently published by the Irish Times.

The addition of the RCSIsmj to the RCSI Repository together with the handles (unique identifiers) that students can use in their CVs, email signatures etc. has greatly enhanced this publication.



Figure 1 - Front page of Volume 17 Number 1. of the RCSI Student Medical Journal (RCSIsmj)