

Why gms?

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Editorial

The idea to publish and distribute papers of the German medical scientific communities in electronic form independent of commercial publishers has been created by the gms founder members AWMF, DIMDI and ZBMed.

An analysis of the Journal Impact Factor and its misleading use, yearly price increases for the subscription of scientific journals and - last but not least - the lack of international acceptance of medical journals in German language had triggered this initiative of the members of the Association of the Scientific Medical Societies in Germany. Limited budgets of university libraries as well as the continuously rising prices of the publishing houses for the subscription of printed scientific journals had further impact on the discussion. Substantial suggestions came from national and international symposia on the future of scientific publishing in the field of medicine. Also authors of DIMDI published a paper on the Journal Impact Factor [1]. The interest on plans for an internet journal broadened quickly.

By inquiries among members of the Association of the Scientific Medical Societies in Germany the requirements regarding current and future publications were determined. These are

- rapid publication
- international acceptance
- searchability in medical databases and on the web
- citability
- long term archiving
- favourable copyright regulations
- small publication costs

In addition, a peer review system was requested in order to guarantee the required quality and the acceptance of the scientific community. Special value was put on the fact that all publications should be searchable in international bibliographic databases and search engines.

Substantial requests came from the clinical sciences publishing their specific journals in national language. Up to now, these publications are not included in international reference data bases (e.g. Medline, Science Citation Index, Current Contents).

The close relationship to the German National Library of Medicine (ZBMed) and to the German Institute for Medical Documentation and Information (DIMDI) led to more concrete plans. A project proposal was prepared and

submitted to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). At present, this DFG grant is the financial basis of German Medical Science.

The German 'Wissenschaftsrat' and 'Hochschulrektorenkonferenz' as well as the DFG pleaded recently for strengthened author rights for scientific publications. It is no longer acceptable that the proprietary right of existing scientific magazines of medical societies and the copyright are handed out to the publishing houses. Furthermore prices for scientific magazines rose in the last year superproportionally despite good income out of subscription and advertisements.

These requests of the scientists and the medical associations lead to the creation of German Medical Science. gms appears as electronic journal consisting of at least three levels:

- Level 1 contains peer-reviewed high-quality interdisciplinary publications.
- A structured second level: will include scientific journals of specific medical societies under their own regime and their peer review system.
- A third level will be available for communications, congress reports and announcements.

Detailed plans for the structure of this level will be available soon.

Editorial board and project partners of German Medical Science are aware that they enter innovative and undiscovered ground. We follow this new path to the advantage of the authors, libraries, medical science and - in the end - the patients.

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