

Curating an evidence base for health research and policy making: more crucial than ever

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The end of the year is a good time to reflect on why a journal like the *MJA* does what it does, who supports the Journal's work, and the headwinds that journals are navigating.

The *MJA* publishes high quality research and commentary that aims to inform health policy and influence medical practice in Australia. Our process is largely one of curation of what is submitted to us, combined with commissioning on issues we identify as important. We prioritise for publication articles that report on or discuss conditions with a high burden of disease, that are likely to have an effect on policy or practice, support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing, and articles that report on uniquely Australian topics.

Articles go through a rigorous process that includes editorial assessment, peer review, author revision in response to peer review, and, after acceptance, expert structural editing. We hope that this process — essentially a collaboration between authors, editors and reviewers — will ensure that, by the time an article is published, it is the best representation of the authors' work. In the 12 months to 31 October 2024, the *MJA* received 1598 articles, of which 196 were accepted; we publish around 10–12 in each issue. Each issue is a curated mix of content; some, such as the theme issues on surgery (<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2024/220/5>), general practice (<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2024/220/9>), women's health (<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2024/221/7>), infectious diseases (<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2024/221/4>), child and adolescent health (<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2024/221/10>), and the special issue on Indigenous health (<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2024/221/1>), have a specific focus.

This end of year issue has no specific theme; its diversity, however, collectively reflects the Journal's priorities. We hope these articles will interest you as readers and support you in your clinical practice or research as much as we were fascinated by them as editors. The research articles include an analysis of the cost of treating hypertension (<https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52522>), participation in the national bowel screening program by people with severe mental illness (<https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52521>), an analysis of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests (<https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52532>), and an analysis of the Northern Territory health workforce (<https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52507>). Perspectives include the need for targeted prevention and treatment of stroke in young women (<https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52516>), and a review of the evidence of persistently replicating SARS-CoV-2 as a driver of long COVID (<https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52517>). We are proud to also publish in this section a thoughtful article, "Decolonisation, Indigenous health research, and Indigenous authorship: sharing our teams' principles and practices" (<https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52509>), by a collective of Aboriginal and non-Indigenous researchers, who work together in two Aboriginal-led research teams.



In the decisions we make at the *MJA*, we are supported on a daily basis by many reviewers who give their time and expertise to help us provide what we think is an essential service: high quality evidence-based research and commentary to support decision making in health care. In the past 12 months, they submitted between them 855 reviews. We provide below a list of the reviewers who have reviewed for us in the past 12 months and we are grateful to all of them for what they do to support the *MJA*. We are also very grateful to the members of our Editorial Advisory Group, who provide ongoing expert advice. This year we are especially grateful to the Guest Editors for the July special issue on Indigenous health that we published in association with the Lowitja Institute (<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2024/221/1>). Their work in curating this special issue is one that we were very proud to support as part of the *MJA*'s ongoing commitment to excellence and leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led health research.

In 2024, more than 100 countries, representing about half of the world's population, have had the chance to vote in regional, national or local elections. Perhaps, more than ever before, the evidence base for science and medicine have been on the ballot and it is not clear that it has been on the winning side in every case. In reflecting back on what we do, the role of peer-reviewed journals such as the *MJA* will be even more crucial over the

next few years in helping navigate the vast amount of medical information that exists. We are very grateful for everyone that supports the work that we do at the *MJA*, and who does

work themselves in evidence-based health research and policy making. Now, more than ever, this work is crucial to support a functioning and evidence-informed society.

The *MJA* Editorial Advisory Group, November 2024

The *MJA* Editorial Advisory Group members are eminent clinicians and scholars who are valuable sources of ideas for the content of the Journal. They provide constructive criticism of the format and content of the Journal, and provide independent advice to the *MJA* Editorial Committee on appeals of editorial decisions, problematic articles, and complaints about the editorial process.

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