

## The SSPH+ Young Researcher Editorials (YRE)

An editorial series of the International Journal of Public Health (IJPH) and a training project of the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+)

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### Summary

**Background:** The mission of the IJPH of SSPH+ is to provide a discussion forum for contemporary issues and challenges in global public health research and practice. The SSPH+ is committed to train the youngest generation of public health researchers. The novel editorial project provides unique hands-on training to PhD students.

**Aims:** Young Researcher Editorials (YRE) aims to engage PhD students of SSPH+ to lead the YRE editorial series, written by PhD students from across the world on topical public health discussions. The YRE series editors will identify relevant public health topics, acquire and review editorial contributions, and take editorial decisions.

**Procedure:** A group of PhD students affiliated with a SSPH+ institution forms the YRE board. This board takes full responsibility in running the editorial series YRE. The students define the functioning of the team in line with IJPH guidelines, governance concept, and best practice standards in science communication. They acquire editorials from across the world and review these. They develop strategies to get excellent editorials and they monitor the performance of the board.

**Benefits:** The SSPH+ students organizing the series will acquire operational and strategical skills in journal editing and scientific debate. Authors of the YRE's will train to choose and concisely write up evidence based and topical opinion papers that convey a clear message relevant to an interdisciplinary audience. IJPH and its readers obtain new and possibly unconventional perspectives from young public health scientists. SSPH+ honors the investment of the YRE board with 1 ECTS (YRE editor-in-chief: 2 ECTS) for their innovative work.

## 1. Introduction and rationale

One of the key pillars of the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+) is the training of the next generation of leading public health scientists. In a joint project of the SSPH+ and its scientific journal, the International Journal of Public Health (IJPH), a unique hands-on editorial training experience is offered to PhD students in public health sciences: the SSPH+ Young Researcher Editorials (YRE). In this IJPH editorial series, PhD students from across the world get the opportunity to publish editorials. PhD students affiliated with a SSPH+ institution, lead and autonomously run the YRE series. The aim of this joint SSPH+ and IJPH endeavor is to engage the youngest generation of public health scientist in the discussion of topical public health issues while training editorial responsibilities as authors, reviewers, and editors.

## 2. Definition and topics of YRE

YRE are peer-reviewed publications, written by PhD students and regularly published in IJPH. They comply with the usual format and length of IJPH editorials (800 words, 5 references). Authors write about public health relevant themes of their choice, in line with the general aims and scopes of IJPH and the YRE strategy as defined by the YRE editorial board.

Editorials may

- raise novel issues of public health relevance
- discuss recent publications or themes addressed in IJPH or elsewhere
- debate public health sciences and related policies
- promote discussions about public health science careers and related challenges
- place public health challenges in a broader context
- address and discuss global or multi-regional relevance

While YRE may address specific research topics and published articles, it is not the place to publish new findings from the own research (e.g. “short reports” of the own PhD results). The YRE are well-written concise texts and distinguish between opinions and properly cited facts. They convey a clear message.

All editorials are written in English, using style and language understandable to a multidisciplinary community interested in public health. Non-native English speakers use the help of native English speakers to improve the language before they submit editorials to YRE.

YRE have short, catchy titles, are 800 words long, and have five to a maximum of ten references. Like for all submissions, IJPH will check YRE for plagiarism which is not accepted by IJPH. A scientific and English editor will edit all accepted YRE before publication. The professional writing feedback is a final and important training step for YRE authors.

## 3. Authors of YRE

At time of submission, authors must be matriculated as PhD students in an accredited university. The global community of YRE authors are typically doing research in public health sciences unless the YRE board of editors decides to invite PhD students from other fields. Typically, one author writes the YRE but co-authorship of up to two co-authors may be accepted. A young researcher can submit a YRE up to 12 months after the defense of the

own PhD thesis. Prime strategies to recruit authors will be through the pool of associate and senior editors of IJPH and strategies pursued and implemented by the YRE board.

#### 4. YRE board of editors

The YRE is led by the YRE board of editors. All YRE board members are registered PhD students in one of the universities of the SSPH+ foundation, supervised by a SSPH+ [fellow](#). A board member can serve up to 36 months but no longer than up to 12 months after the defense of the own thesis. The board consists in at least five up to maximum nine members. The board takes the lead in running the YRE series. Its responsibilities include acquiring and handling of submitted YRE, reviewing of YRE, the handling of feed-back to authors, authors' responses, and revised versions, the decisions about rejection and revisions, and the proposition for final acceptance. The board members work as volunteers (i.e. no payment). SSPH+ confirms the service on the YRE board which corresponds to 1 ECTS per term if served for at least one year (two semesters). The board may work with skype or teleconferences. Physical meetings are not required. The board can ask SSPH+ for financial support of YRE related expenses of up to CHF 500 per year.

The board is responsible for the organization and management of its YRE editorial work while adhering to the general rules of IJPH and those specified for the YRE. The board guarantees that at least two board members critically review each YRE. While reviews may be very short, reviewers write them in proper style, politely and constructively and submit them to the IJPH submission and review system. In contrast to IJPH original articles, YRE are not sent to external reviewers, but are handled and reviewed by the YRE board, apart from rare exceptions where the YRE board has conflicts of interest or YRE are outside the expertise of the YRE board. For these, external reviewers are invited, e.g. from the SSPH+ or IJPH editorial board or other. Board members acting as authors of YRE declare conflict of interest, thus, cannot act as handling editor or reviewer of their (co-)authored editorial.

#### 5. Editor-in-chief of YRE

One member of the YRE board takes up the role as the editor-in-chief (EiC) of the YRE. The EiC of YRE can serve in this role for up to 24 months but no longer than up to 12 months after the defense of the own PhD thesis. The EiC leads the YRE and its board in all regards. The EiC of YRE is the first board member to receive a new submission. He/she usually acts directly as the handling editor of YRE, thus, invites two board members to review the submission. He/she may opt for the delegation of the role as handling editor to another YRE board member who, thus, will organize the two reviews. All authors get a written response with either reviews or a rationale for the rejection without review ("pre-screen"). SSPH+ confirms the service as EiC with 2 ECTS per term if served for at least 12 months (or two semesters).

#### 6. Governance

The YRE board is self-organized and responsible for all editorial office work related to YRE. YRE is an integral part of IJPH, thus, the YRE board complies with all administrative and

formal rules of IJPH and the COPE guidelines. Submissions, pre-screen (by the YRE EiC) and the handling and review of the submitted YRE's are organized in the submission handling system used by IJPH according to the same rules and procedures adopted for all other IJPH submissions. YRE board members sign a statement confirming compliance with the COPE editor guidelines.

In case of need, YRE board members clarify all issues with the editorial office of IJPH as the only partner. YRE board members do in particular not deal with any staff from the Publisher. The EiC of YRE provides the final proposal for acceptance of a YRE to one of the EiC of IJPH who has the final responsibility of IJPH publications. The main purpose of this step – a default for all work published in IJPH – is to guarantee that all YRE are in line with the code of conduct and ethical standards of IJPH, thus, the EiC of IJPH will usually not intervene in YRE board strategies or content.

The SSPH+ Directorate office supports the YRE board to contact other PhD students from the SSPH+ universities as needed. The series editors will obtain access to the IJPH online manuscript handling system (run by Frontiers) to organize the peer review for the editorials. The YRE board complies with the rules related to the manuscript handling system provided by the publisher.

All YRE are submitted to the IJPH editorial series “Young Researchers Editorial”. The title of the editorial is short and catchy. The address of correspondence is presented. A footnote text box contains the following text:

The series “Young researcher editorial” is a PhD training project of the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+). The series is run under the responsibility and leadership of SSPH+ PhD students. For details on this project, please see the SSPH+ website.

## **7. Recruitment and composition of the YRE board of young editors**

The editors-in-chief (EiC) of IJPH appoints the YRE EiC from volunteering eligible candidates (see below). Candidates submit via e-mail a short motivation letter and CV, contact details, tentative title of the PhD thesis, start date, expected end date, name of the supervisor, training and/or experience in publishing, and an email of the supervisor confirming his/her agreement to let the PhD student taking up this role.

The YRE EiC is then in charge of proposing YRE board members to the IJPH EiC. Those submit the same material mentioned above to the YRE EiC. The EiC of IJPH usually approves the proposal of the YRE board and EiC as long as the YRE board is adequately gender balanced and usually with representatives of all three language regions of the SSPH+ foundation members.

## **8. Performance measures**

The YRE board defines and measures the performance of all YRE board members and the series. They assess the performance twice a year and report to the IJPH EiC and the IJPH managing editor. Performance criteria for handling YRE editorials may include the number of acquired, handled and published editorials, the time from submission of the editorial to

accept or reject decisions of the handling editor. Other tasks and responsibilities such as organizing calls, drafting texts for the IJPH website, blog and social media are also relevant for the performance as are strategic contributions of the board members such as raising topics for the series, running calls and shaping the governance. The YRE editors also assess and report on the impact of the YRE based on Altmetrics measures and citations in the Web of Science.

Upon termination of the active term, the IJPH editors-in-chief will provide a certificate letter to the YRE board member with descriptive reference to the summary measures of performance.

## 9. Implementation phase (July 2017-June 2018)

YRE is a novel element of IJPH, initiated by IJPH and a PhD student from Swiss TPH, and supported by other students from Swiss TPH. The initiator of this project will be appointed as the first YRE EiC. The second and third YRE EiC may again be a PhD student from Swiss TPH to guarantee optimal development of this novel training project in close collaboration with the Swiss TPH based editorial office and one of the EiC of IJPH.

To collect first experiences and properly implement, test, and adapt the procedures, the first EiC of YRE may opt to start with a smaller board (at least 3) of his choice. Within no more than 12 months, the first board proposes additional board members in such a way to guarantee proper representation of SSPH+ PhD students from at least the three linguistic regions of SSPH+ foundation universities.

