

SERBIAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESOURCE IN MEETING PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

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Background: Major public health challenges of the 21st century: aging population, non-communicable diseases with the associated risk factors, mental health conditions, emerging and established communicable diseases, antimicrobial resistance, environmental crises, increasingly frequent public health emergencies, infodemics, vaccine mistrust and rapid development of technology call for accessible, vetted information and knowledge exchange among scientists, policy-makers and practitioners. Peer-reviewed journals offer reliable information and may be a key resource. Serbian Journal of Public Health was renewed in 2021 with this purpose as an open-access, peer-reviewed, bilingual scientific journal with public health scope.

Methods and Objectives: To assess the role of Serbian Journal of Public Health (SerbJPH) in the described setting a qualitative study was conducted on 85 articles across 11 issues of Serb JPH published between December 2021 and June 2024, using a six-step thematic analysis of the titles, abstracts and keywords.

Results: The study identified 12 main topics, highlighting the journal's multidisciplinary. The most common identified public-health themes were: non-communicable disease control and detection, prevention and management of communicable diseases appearing in 32.9% and 25.8% of the articles, respectively. The most frequent sub-topic was COVID-19, found in 14.1% of the articles, with a peak in 2022. Other themes of note were: laboratory diagnostics (major sub-theme: genotyping), public health emergencies preparedness and management, vaccinology, universal health coverage (major sub-themes: quality of care and public health workforce), mental health, child and adolescent health, health information system and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Majority of articles referred to multiple topics, showing interdisciplinary approach not only within the journal as a whole but also within each study.

Conclusions: Themes identified in SerbJPH correspond to current major public health challenges and hence are highly relevant. Offering peer-reviewed information that is highly accessible, both in the local language – Serbian and the lingua franca of science – English, as an open source model available digitally and in print, SerbJPH makes a platform for sharing experience and evidence-based knowledge among healthcare providers, policy makers, scientists and community organisations contributing to the overarching goal of improving health outcomes. Its interdisciplinary approach highlights the complexity of public health challenges requiring collaborative solutions.

Keywords: public health challenges, scientific journals, exchange of knowledge, peer-reviewed information, interdisciplinarity