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Fiftieth anniversary of the Brazilian Journal of Occupational Health: a milestone to celebrate the past and build the future

Cinquentenário da Revista Brasileira de Saúde Ocupacional: um marco para celebrar o passado e construir o futuro

Abstract

The Brazilian Journal of Occupational Health (RBSO) is a reference journal within the occupational health and safety community. It is dedicated to publishing scientific articles that contribute to the critical analysis of current and pertinent issues concerning the relationship between work and health. In 2023, RBSO celebrates its 50th anniversary. This editorial note is dedicated to reporting on the commemorative event, describing the main topics covered in the presentations and discussions, with the aim of documenting this important moment, which can be considered a milestone for celebrating the past and building the future of RBSO. This event offered a crucial opportunity not only to celebrate RBSO's five decades of existence but also to bring together a community deeply committed to scientific publishing in the field of occupational health. It brought valuable reflections, proposals, and recommendations aimed at strengthening both the journal and the field it represents. The presence and active participation of the editorial team, along with the invited attendees, played an indispensable role in the success of this gathering. During this event, RBSO reaffirmed its dedication to keep enhancing its editorial standards, drawing from the experiences and ideas that have been discussed.

Keywords: occupational health; electronic journals; periodical; festschrift; scholarly communication.

Resumo

A Revista Brasileira de Saúde Ocupacional (RBSO) é um periódico considerado referência pela comunidade da área de segurança e saúde do trabalhador, sendo veículo dedicado à publicação de artigos científicos que contribuam para a reflexão e análise científica de questões atuais e relevantes relacionadas às relações entre trabalho e saúde. Em 2023, a RBSO completa 50 anos de existência. Esta nota editorial dedica-se a relatar o evento comemorativo, descrevendo os principais aspectos abordados nas apresentações e nos debates ocorridos, com vistas a registrar este importante momento, que pode ser considerado um marco para celebrar o passado e construir o futuro da revista. Tal evento foi uma oportunidade crucial, não somente para celebrar o meio século de existência da RBSO, mas também para propiciar o encontro de uma comunidade dedicada à publicação científica em saúde do trabalhador, que proporcionou reflexões, propostas e recomendações voltadas ao fortalecimento da revista e do campo. A presença e o envolvimento da equipe editorial, bem como dos convidados, foram fundamentais para o sucesso desse encontro, durante o qual a RBSO reafirmou o compromisso com a busca contínua por aprimoramento editorial, a partir das experiências e ideias debatidas.

Palavras-chave: saúde do trabalhador; revistas eletrônicas; publicação periódica; publicação comemorativa; comunicação acadêmica.



Introduction

The Brazilian Journal of Occupational Health (RBSO) was established in 1973 and has been edited by the Jorge Duprat Figueiredo Foundation for Occupational Safety and Medicine (Fundacentro) ever since. Its mission is to disseminate “original unpublished research articles on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) that can contribute to understand and improve work conditions, to prevent injuries and labor illnesses, as well as supporting discussions and defining public policies related to the theme.”¹

The journal is considered a reference by the OSH community, serving as a platform for the publication of scientific articles that contribute to the reflection and scientific analysis of current and relevant issues on the relationship between work and health. We should recognize the historical journey of the journal, with challenges inherent to a field in evolution, its association with a government institution—Fundacentro, linked to the Ministry of Labor, under different political and organizational configurations—as well as the intrinsic difficulties of publishing a scientific journal dedicated to the OSH niche in Brazil. Therefore, it is essential to engage in dialogue with its broader community and constantly seek to improve its editorial policies.^{2,3}

In this context, as part of the activities celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of RBSO,⁴ an event was held on August 31, 2023, at the National Technical Center of Fundacentro in São Paulo, which was planned in two parts. In the morning, the first part involved a meeting with the expanded editorial team of RBSO, including the Chief Editors, Executive Editors, the Deputy Editor, the Executive Secretariat team, as well as Associate Editors, both internal and external to Fundacentro. In the afternoon, the second part featured external speakers, editors of journals related to RBSO, who shared their insights on future challenges in scientific publishing, with a focus on occupational health (Figure 1). It was an open event to the public, with online broadcasting via Fundacentro’s YouTube channel (available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfDjrDolleY&t=3568s>).

This Editorial Note is dedicated to reporting on this event, describing the main topics covered in the presentations and discussions, aiming to document this important moment, which can be considered a milestone for celebrating the past and building the future of RBSO.

First moment: meeting of the expanded editorial team

In this meeting, three presentations were given, covering the overview and development of RBSO, followed by a discussion with the participating editors.

The first presentation was delivered by Júlio César Lopardo Alves, representing the Executive Secretariat team of RBSO, which includes himself, Maria Angela Pizzani Cruz, and Tarsila Baptista Ponce. The responsibilities of the executive secretariat were discussed, emphasizing its role as the “link” between the editors, the editorial team, the authors, and the contracted company for editorial production services. The different stages of the editorial process were presented, from document verification of received manuscripts, screening, peer review, editorial decision, post-publication revisions, editorial production stages, and finally, publication on the SciELO portal. Data extracted from the Scholar One platform (the manuscript management system used by RBSO) regarding the number of submitted and published articles and processing times until rejection or publication were presented. Based on these elements, guidelines were provided to the editorial team to ensure the smooth flow of manuscripts and the reduction of timeframes.

Eduardo Garcia Garcia, Executive Editor, addressed the progress of the journal in the second presentation of the morning. Citation metrics of RBSO were presented, with a focus on the evolution of H5 index and H5 median indicators made available by Google Scholar metrics. In 2022, RBSO ranked 47th in the Google Scholar ranking for scientific journals published in Portuguese. The wide reach of the journal was evident by its high number of accesses from different parts of the world, as well as its position as a scientific publication in the field of occupational health among other journals in this field and in public health. The citation of articles published in RBSO present in decisions made by judges of the Superior Labor Court (TST) reinforces the relevance of this journal and its impact beyond citation metrics.

Leila Posenato Garcia, Associate Editor, presented perspectives for the enhancement of RBSO. Initially, she highlighted aspects related to open access and the quality of scientific publishing, such as the dominance of major commercial publishers from the global North, the misguided association between open access and predatory journals, the significance of the SciELO Project, celebrating its 25 years of existence, and the insufficient recognition of Brazilian journals by national funding agencies. She outlined strategies to expand RBSO's indexations, including the revision of author guidelines, whose updated version was published in 2023. She also discussed aspects related to sustainability within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed upon by United Nations member countries, as well as ongoing initiatives to accelerate editorial workflows and increase the number of published articles. In a rapidly evolving landscape of scientific publishing, the editorial team of RBSO must remain vigilant, updated, skilled, and motivated, given the crucial role of the editorial team in ensuring the journal's quality.

In the discussion, coordinated by Co-Editor-in-Chief Eduardo Algranti, Associate Editors raised their questions and proposals. The main point of discussion was the recognition of RBSO's relevance, its leadership as a Portuguese-language journal dedicated to occupational health, established over 50 years, and its evident social impact. A proposal was made to establish a kind of consensus or pact by the collaboration of occupational health researchers in Brazil, aiming to undertake collaborative actions to strengthen RBSO.

Among the other topics discussed, the quality of submitted articles, the workload of reviewers, strategies to expand the pool of reviewers and encourage their engagement, initiatives to increase scientific communication to the general population, collaboration with scientific societies, expanding RBSO's visibility and connections with countries in the global South, and the use of artificial intelligence tools to support scientific publishing activities were highlighted.

Second moment: RBSO 50 Years, A Look at Future Challenges

In the opening session, with the participation of Fundacentro's President and Directors, and José Marçal Jackson Filho, Co-Editor-in-Chief of RBSO, the importance of RBSO in the field of OSH as an instrument for science and workers' health in Brazil was emphasized. It was noted that the list of Brazilian scientific journals that are 50 years or older is quite small, reinforcing the commitment of the current and past editorial team of RBSO to build a solid foundation for the journal and maintain its scientific quality. The editorial team works continuously to strengthen the journal and relies on the support of Fundacentro's current management to ensure that RBSO continues to fulfill its noble mission.

Next, the panel coordinated by Professor Ada Ávila Assunção, Co-Editor-in-Chief of RBSO, featured the participation of two female editors and one male editor of scientific journals (Figure 1).

The first lecture was delivered by Taissa Vieira Machado Vila, Chief Editor of The Lancet Regional Health Americas, who addressed the North-South editorial challenges related to health and work. She recounted the challenge of creating a new journal in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic, within an established family of journals, with the original journal—The Lancet—celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2023. She highlighted the unique perspective of the journal in contextualizing health issues through the lens of public health and regional context, aiming to give voice to issues that are typically ignored in other international publications. She also mentioned the difficulties in recruiting reviewers, especially women from Latin America, due to the gender equity promotion policy adopted by Lancet family journals. The Lancet Regional Health Americas is a gold open-access journal, which poses a barrier to publication with article processing fees charged in American dollars. Moreover, a language barrier exists since the journal only accepts submissions in English, creating a double barrier for both authors and readers. She criticized the requirement for impact factors, which, in her opinion, needs to be reconsidered. She presented examples of articles published in the journal that address OSH and COVID-19, with a significant volume of citations. She expressed joy in seeing the results of scientific research published influencing health policies and guidelines.



Figure 1 Promotional Card for the 50th Anniversary Event of the Brazilian Journal of Occupational Health

Narufumi Suganuma, Chief Editor of the Journal of Occupational Health, from the Japanese Society of Occupational Health (JSOH), was the second speaker. He noted that his journal shares part of its name with RBSO and undoubtedly presents many affinities. It was established in 1929 and transformed into an English-language journal in 1996. The journal covers various topics such as toxicology, ergonomics, health promotion, epidemiology, occupational health practice, and mental health. It is an international journal with editors, reviewers, and authors from various countries worldwide. In 2019, its sister journal, Environmental and Occupational Health Practice (EOH-P), was launched. Suganuma congratulated RBSO on its 50th anniversary, recognizing the editorial team's dedication over the years to ensure the continuity and quality of the journal, and wished them success from this significant milestone.

The third speaker, Angélica Ferreira Fonseca, is the Chief Editor of the journal *Trabalho, Educação e Saúde*, edited by the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) and the Coordinator of the Forum of Editors of Public Health Journals, Brazilian Association of Public Health (ABRASCO). In her speech on the challenges of journals in public health and the health and work theme, considering the celebration of RBSO's 50 years, she proposed a different perspective for thinking about scientific endeavors and emphasized the importance of maintaining the ability to formulate good questions. She believes that the central role of journals is to mobilize ideas, questions, and investigative paths that respond to social issues and promote social change. Journals in the field of Public Health do not aim to be conservative, making a commitment to look at Brazil and recognize its diverse facets, an outlook that evolves over time and history. The fiftieth anniversary of RBSO is a favorable moment for the persistence of critical renewal. When examining the most-cited articles from RBSO in Google Scholar⁵⁻¹¹, it was noticed that the journal contributed to questioning stigmas and shedding light on topics related to reducing inequalities and social inclusion. It can be said that RBSO, like other Public Health journals, plays an extremely relevant role in democratic social construction, in dialogue with the scientific community and society. An important challenge is the adequacy of manuscripts, as revealed by high rejection rates. These productions are a response to a system that aggressively pressures for publication volume. Simultaneously, there is an expansion of researchers' training in postgraduate courses, including professional programs, which use work-related topics and experience for research. Sometimes, journals experience a crisis where they struggle to handle the volume of submissions, often resulting in more of the same, as stated by the Editors of *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*.¹² To overcome these challenges, journals must participate in more meetings and debates on editorial production. Editors and potential authors should act as allies, not adversaries. Publishing is not easy, but the manuscript should not be seen as a product of academic consumption; current digital media dissemination methods can contribute to the circulation of ideas and the reach of science. In Public Health, publication is not only for scientists and researchers; it is desirable to engage with workers, professionals from the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS), social movements, students, and society at large who care about knowledge. Expanding scientific

dissemination is always a permanent challenge. There will only be a future for Brazilian scientific journals if editorial work is included as part of a national and sovereign scientific-technological project within the context of the open science movement. This goal and other actions aimed at improving journals can be more easily achieved by the unified efforts among editors and adoption of strategies to reduce inequalities. In contrast to the pressure from international publishing oligopolies, an approach should be taken on multiple fronts, both politically and technically. It is necessary to overcome the challenges that public institutions have faced in taking actions so that Brazilian journals can achieve the recognition they deserve.

During the discussion with the audience, the challenges faced by Brazilian journals in the face of the requirements of evaluation and funding agencies, which favor publication in hegemonic journals edited by large commercial publishers in the global North, were highlighted. This influence affects the choice of research questions, favoring topics with greater potential for acceptance in these journals, while simultaneously driving away good authors, editors, and reviewers from national journals.

The difficulty in obtaining *ad hoc* reviewer collaboration was discussed as a common problem for several journals. In addition to extending article processing times, this problem impacts the sustainability of journals, as the peer review process characterizes scientific journals, which, in turn, rely on the voluntary work of reviewers.

The discussion also included the role of scientific editors, who are distinct from co-authors and closer to qualified readers, seeking to contribute to the improvement of study reporting to facilitate approval in the review process and eventual publication in the journal. The view of journal editors on the importance of the growth of the Brazilian scientific publishing ecosystem is often not shared by the leaders of Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) and Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).¹³ Therefore, editors and researchers must engage in a movement that considers differences in topics, problems, and questions, and that converges in favor of strengthening national journals.

At the end of the event, a photographic record was taken with the RBSO editorial team (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Photographic record of the closing of the 50th anniversary event of the Brazilian Journal of Occupational Health

Image: Clodoaldo Caetité de Novaes (Fundacentro)

Final remarks

The commemorative event for RBSO's anniversary was a crucial opportunity, not only to celebrate half a century of its existence but also to bring together a community dedicated to scientific publication in occupational health, which provided reflections, proposals, and recommendations aimed at strengthening the Journal and the field.

The presence and engagement of the editorial team, as well as the invited guests, were essential for the success of this gathering, during which RBSO reaffirmed its commitment to the continuous pursuit of editorial improvement based on the experiences and ideas discussed.

The discussion in the afternoon aligned with the morning's debate about the challenges and difficulties of scientific journals and how to overcome them. The need to mobilize efforts, involving the editorial community and scientific societies, to achieve greater recognition of Brazilian journals, the editorial work related to them, and the role of these journals in the country's scientific production became evident. In this regard, rethinking the role and construction of Qualis CAPES criteria is a critical issue. Efforts should be made to establish consensus on the relevance of Brazilian scientific journals or even form a pact with the academic community. This will ensure that the sustainability of scientific journals is understood as an integral part of science and technology public policies and a crucial component of a sovereignty project aimed at supporting the development of national scientific endeavor.

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