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# As a journal we have one voice: the editorial

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Traditionally, editorials are reflections of a journal's editor on selected articles, a specific theme or a prominent topic that should be addressed.<sup>1</sup> They are the voice of a journal connecting with its readership. Over recent years, this purpose has shifted, and editorials have become, in many cases, opinion pieces written by external authors discussing recent developments or proposing new perspectives or ideas. Although there is an explanation for this 'evolution', we decided to take our journal's voice back.

## DO EDITORIALS STILL SERVE A PURPOSE?

In her last editorial for the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Ann Forsyth reflected on the evolution of editorials while serving as editor-in-chief. While she stated that 'editorials have a role in connecting to readers and authors,' she also realised that editorials today may have lost this purpose.<sup>2</sup> The internet has made it easier to find articles through online searches rather than through an edited hard copy of a journal. More so, Social Media has become a powerful resource for journals and authors to share freshly published work.<sup>3</sup> Physical journal copies simply have become less important for disseminating peer-reviewed scientific publications. In fact, some journals, like ours, do not even exist in hard copy. We offer our published articles on an online platform; all searchable, findable and citable. This has reduced an editorial's value of introducing a journal issue, explaining editorial choices and glueing publications together.

## VIEWPOINTS VERSUS EDITORIALS

For most academic journals, the purpose of an editorial has evolved. It became a platform for thought leadership, allowing topical experts to provide insights, perspectives and opinions on current trends, controversies and future directions in sports and exercise medicine. Some of these have proven to be influential commentaries that have shaped the conversation in our field. To harness this

potential, editorials that outline a recipe for writing a solid editorial have been published.<sup>4</sup> Yes, the pun was intentional in the previous sentence, as there is a flip side that should not be ignored. Editorials are generally well cited, but as they are not original articles, they are not counted in the denominator of a journal's impact factor. Especially in the field of 'medicine', to which our topic belongs, this has led to editorials being a stratagem to boost journal impact factors.<sup>5</sup> However, please be assured that this practice is not necessarily misconduct. What matters most to us is that there must be a clear distinction between a journal's voice and an author's personal opinion, as both serve their unique purpose (figure 1).

At BMJ Open SEM (in short BOSEM), we can make this distinction as we offer 'viewpoints' as a separate article type from editorials. Viewpoints allow anyone to provide our readership with an informed, research-based opinion or perspective on a particular subject of interest. They are not solicited, offer a higher word count, allow more figures and references and are externally peer-reviewed, perfectly designed to deliver your opinion and views stronger than an editorial.

## TOP TIPS ON WRITING VIEWPOINTS

We look forward to hearing and sharing your viewpoints. To help you make the best out of these article types and generate impact with your ideas, here are some of our tips and tricks to write a powerful viewpoint.

**Relevance:** Discuss a topic of current interest and relevance to our readership. This could include emerging trends, recent research findings, public health issues or controversial sports and exercise medicine topics.

**Clarity and conciseness:** Viewpoints should be concise and to the point. Avoid jargon and ensure your message is accessible to a broad audience, including clinicians, researchers, policy-makers and sometimes the general public.



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EDITORIAL		VIEWPOINT	
Word count	Up to 1000 (excluding references and tables)	Up to 1500 words (excluding references and tables)	Word count
Authorship	By invitation only	Written by anyone	Authorship
Purpose	To provide an analysis and discussion of a current issue of interest to the BOSEM readership	To provide an informed, research-based opinion or perspective on a subject of interest to the BOSEM readership	Purpose
Figures allowed	Up to 2 tables and/or figures	Up to 4 tables and/or figures	Figures allowed
References	Up to 10 references	Up to 30 references	References
Peer review	Internally peer-reviewed	Externally peer-reviewed	Peer review
Tone & Style	Concise and directive in nature	More in-depth, focusing on single perspectives	Tone & Style
<p>Reflections of our journal on selected articles, a specific theme or a prominent topic that should be addressed. Editorials are the voice of BOSEM connecting with our readership.</p>		<p>Offer a platform for thought leadership, allowing experts to provide insights, perspectives, and opinions on current controversies, trends, and future directions in sports and exercise medicine.</p>	

**Figure 1** The format, purpose and value of editorials and viewpoints.

**Evidence-based arguments:** Make sure your arguments are grounded in evidence by supporting them with references to recent research, guidelines or expert consensus. This not only strengthens your rationale but also maintains the academic integrity of your work.

**Call to action:** A strong viewpoint should leave the reader with a clear message or call to action. This could be advocating for a change in practice, suggesting new research directions or raising awareness about a particular issue.

**Tone and style:** The tone should be authoritative yet engaging. Aim to inform, persuade and inspire rather than share your opinion. We encourage a lively and thought-provoking writing style, avoiding overly technical language.

**Provide recommended resources:** Let the reader's journey continue after your conclusion. Providing high-quality resources at the end of your paper can help your readers dive deep into the topic. Include access to relevant, reputable websites or other resources that support your viewpoint.

**Disclose conflicts of interest:** While viewpoints are opinion pieces, transparency is key. It may seem redundant, but disclosing potential conflicts of interest or biases that could influence your perspectives is essential to maintaining trust with the reader.

### WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US: THE EDITORIAL TEAM?

As an editorial team, we will bring our editorials to their more traditional purpose: sharing our views that guide the content of BOSEM. We outlined BOSEM's vision of where we want to contribute to our field and where our journal fits in this space.<sup>6</sup> Editorials allow us to go into more detail and share what we, as a diverse group of editors, feel demands a critical discussion. We will share with you how BOSEM, as an academic journal, aims to

do its part to move the needle. By doing so, potential authors will know what we seek at BOSEM, and we invite you to join us in the discussion. As a bonus, while we are a venue for academic publishing, we will also use our editorials to guide you through the publication process from start to finish. Together, we are the community. Our editorial diversity can enrich the conversation, bring fresh perspectives and reflect on the global nature of sports and exercise medicine.

Our editorial mandate is to engage our academic and clinical readers, highlight current and emerging topics and inspire fruitful discussions that will benefit the field of Sports and Exercise Medicine. We look forward to providing our journal's voice through conventional editorials and yours through well-crafted viewpoints.

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