**BDJ Open 2021 – our most successful year to date**

Jonathan Lewney

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### Key points

- Provides an update on the previous 2019–2020 paper by examining articles published in **BDJ Open** in 2021, to highlight which areas researchers felt were important to publish open access.
- Highlights the advantages of open access publishing to authors, readers and the scientific community, particularly in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- Explores how open access publishing in **BDJ Open** has enabled the continuous process of hypothesis testing to be shared more widely, allowing earlier opportunity for comment by other researchers.

### Abstract

This paper aims to provide an update on the previous version published towards the end of last year, titled ‘**BDJ Open** (2019–2020) and the advantages of open access publishing’. In this paper, we will highlight articles published throughout 2021, in order to focus on which areas authors felt were important to publish open access and also which areas have been expanded upon in the journal. Furthermore, this paper will examine how open access publishing in **BDJ Open** has enabled the continuous process of hypothesis testing to be shared more widely, as well as how publishing protocols and early results open access gives strength to that by allowing earlier opportunity for comment by other researchers, both through the peer review process and through further correspondence to authors directly and to the journal editors who publish their work.

### Introduction

We recently gave an outline of the different types of paper published in 2019 and 2020 as open access through **BDJ Open**, the online sister journal to the **BDJ**. As **BDJ Open** is online-only, there are no constraints in terms of printed pages, and this gives authors the opportunity to publish a wider variety of manuscript types. **BDJ Open** had its most successful year to date in 2021 with 35 published papers. This paper provides an update on the previous one to outline which areas authors chose to publish as open access in 2021.

This year, it was interesting to note an increase in publications that were pilot studies, study protocols and similar. This is a further advantage of open access publishing: the scientific method involves continuous refinement of hypotheses and publishing protocols and early results by open access gives strength to that. It allows earlier opportunity for comment by other researchers, both through the peer review process and through further correspondence to authors directly and to the journal editors who publish their work.

Unsurprisingly, a number of published papers looked at how the COVID-19 pandemic affected dental practice. Naturally, this was an area of rapidly evolving evidence and, again, open access allowed a way of sharing this new, emerging knowledge widely and quickly, as there are generally shorter wait times for publication in online journals. Published manuscripts, including those related to COVID-19, have been grouped in the same way in this update as in the 2019–2020 version of our review of **BDJ Open** published articles. This allows for comparisons to be made between the 2019–2020 and the 2021 reviews.

### Patient experience

In 2021 alone, there were eight papers published on the experience of patients, again from a wide geographical reach including Lima, Malaysia and India. Of these eight, three papers focused on the health and oral health of older adults. This is an indication of the increasing global awareness of this issue.

### Pre-clinical/ex vivo

There were just four papers published reporting the results of ex vivo studies. These outline early pre-clinical studies of new health technologies (new materials, methods and pharmacological interventions) and in vitro studies of existing technologies. These were relatively more frequent in the early days of **BDJ Open**, but this journal now covers the whole range of dental research.

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Accepted 28 March 2022

https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-022-4197-7

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Health technology assessment/clinical interventions

There were ten papers published which examined the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of health technologies and interventions,29–33,35,36 which examine the incidence, distribution and possible control of diseases and other factors relating to health. This is the same number for 2019 and 2020 combined and represents a further area of expansion for BDJ Open.

Epidemiology

There were four papers published in the field of epidemiology,29–31,33,35 which examine the incidence, distribution and possible control of diseases and other factors relating to health. This is the same number for 2019 and 2020 combined and represents a further area of expansion for BDJ Open.

Systematic reviews

There were four systematic reviews published in 2021,32–35,37–39 with just two published in the whole of 2019–2020. BDJ Open is a research journal and so does not currently publish narrative reviews. However, systematic reviews aim to answer a novel question by combining and assessing all the available evidence, and we are very pleased to have published some high-quality systematic reviews in 2021. These are evidently of interest to our readership as the number of referees required to publish 35 papers in a research-only journal.

Further information for potential authors or referees can be found at https://www.nature.com/bdjopen/authors-and-referees.

Ethics declaration

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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