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Why I started a scientific journal for postdoctoral researchers

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Theo van den Broek works as an AIOS Medical Microbiology at UMC Utrecht. In this article he writes about a remarkable initiative he took as a post-doc on starting his own medical journal: the Journal of Life Sciences.

A scientist has many different roles besides performing research; they have a role as educator, writer, speaker, business person, supporter, and reviewer, among others. I wanted to increase my knowledge and experience in these different roles of a scientist, so I signed up for several courses and workshops during my postdoc in Boston. I attended classes about scientists teaching science, science education, leadership and management skills, and how to establish your academic lab, but I still wanted to enhance my skills as a reviewer. So, I joined journal clubs, reviewed the occasional paper for my supervisor, and attended online training. Nevertheless, I felt I needed more exposure to the review process. I approached several journals to consider me as a reviewer, but my offers to review were declined due to lack of experience.

New open-access journal

So, I went one step further and created a journal. The idea would be that this new journal would be an officially registered journal on PubMed and MEDLINE, open access, without a paywall or article publishing costs, and a peer-review process based on scientific, technical, and ethical validity of the article. Most importantly, the journal would allow postdocs to acquire some essential skills in reviewing and editing. The [Journal of Life Sciences](#) or JoLS, was launched in July 2019 as a postdoc community initiative and received immense international support from the scientific community. This new initiative was highlighted in [Nature](#) with a subsequent Nature-organized [webcast](#) on the peer-review process on April 8, 2021. The postdoc community's support was made official by the recent partnership with the National Postdoc Association (USA). As the postdoc community runs the journal, I stepped down as editor-in-chief and joined the journal's advisory board shortly after my postdoc period in Boston. With this change in position, other postdocs would be able to broaden their experience in running and managing a journal and advancing their career development.

Upon returning to Utrecht, I joined the young Dutch Society of Immunology (young-NVvI) as a board member to further work on young scientists' career development. Following my clinical residency in medical microbiology, I want to combine clinic and research as a clinician-scientist within the field of Infection and Immunity. I look forward to the opportunity to train my students to become more complete scientists or clinicians and support their career development within and outside of academia.