
SPM , 50 years: mostly red

Alfredo Morabia is editor-in-chief of this journal

How old is SPM? 85 years? 50 years? 32 years? 6 years? Well, the answer is “it depends”.

1921 was the year of birth of its earliest ancestor, the “Schweizerische Zeitung für Gesundheit und Prävention” (SZGP). Relative to SZGP, we would complete the 85th birthday. In 1956, Preventive Medicine appeared in the title, that is, 50 years ago. “Sozial- und Präventivmedizin” became the official title 32 years ago, in 1974. And in 2000, SPM became the “International Journal of Public Health”.

We picked up the 50th birthday because it is the roundest of all available possible anniversaries. And also because Thomas Abel, my co-chief-editor, and I are more or less 50 years old. We know what being 50 means and we feel empathy for the journal.

As shown below the cover page of your journal has changed regularly over 50 years, about once every 10 years. Colors have changed but red clearly dominates. Or is it white and red? You can decide for you, but be aware that the choice is not innocent and has a very different meaning for the journal. Mostly rebel and/or mostly Swiss?

A history of the tradition of public health journals in Switzerland is still to be written. This editorial has no historical content. It simply stresses the continuity of the journal, at least since 1956. Time and continuity can provide legitimacy. SPM is a local initiative that has progressively gained an international audience.

Not all local research is of universal interest. SPM has and will have to struggle to keep its international audience while being a privileged location to publish research that is relevant for local communities.

During the last five years, SPM has adopted a new profile, centered on surveillance of health determinants and health promotion. It has been successful, but this success is only indirectly reflected in the progression of its impact factor because the journal is cited under many more abbreviations (e. g. Soz Praventivmed, Soz Praeventivmed, Soz Praventiv Med, Soc Prev Med, Int J Public Health) than the only abbreviation recognized by the International Science Index, that is, Soz Praventiv Med. Hence the project to change our name, as a coming editorial will soon explain. But in any case, a new name does not mean that “we’ll change henceforth the old tradition”. Mostly red, it will remain.

Alfredo Morabia

Adress for correspondence

Prof. Alfredo Morabia, MD, PhD
Hôpital Cantonal Universitaire
Division d'épidémiologie clinique
25, rue Micheli-du-Crest
CH-1205 Genève
e-mail: A.morabia@hcuge.ch

