

The SAFP Journal at 45: Reflecting on the Past, Shaping the Future

6 September 2025

27th Annual National Family Practitioners Congress
5-6 September Midrand Conference Centre
*“Learning and Practicing Family Medicine and Primary Healthcare in an ERA
of Global Change”*



Session Outline

Item	Allocated time
Introduction	5 minutes
Past: Reflecting on 45 Years of the SAFPJ	10 minutes
Present: Current Initiatives and Impact	10 minutes
Future: Vision and Opportunities	10 minutes
Interactive Q&A session	20 minutes
Summary and Thank You	5 minutes

Context

Celebrating 45 years
of the SAFPJ

Founded in 1980
alongside the SAAFP

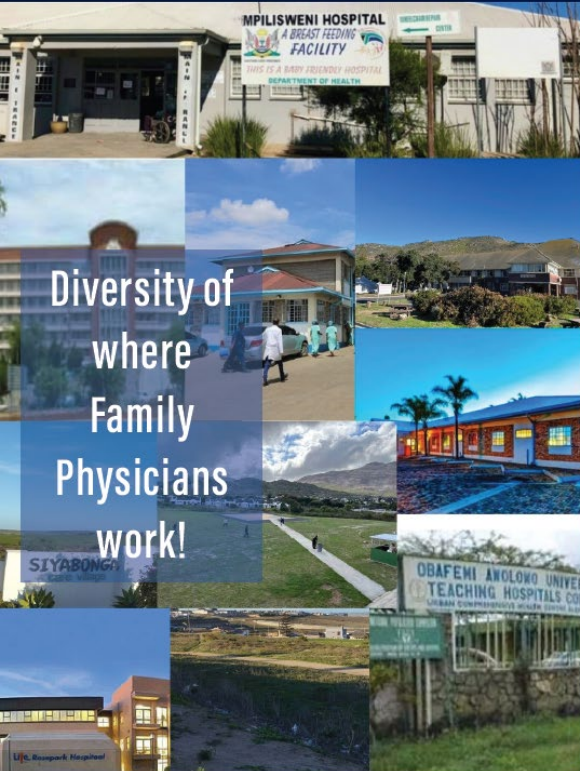
Time to reflect,
reimagine, and
reconnect with our
publishing mission

Anchored in the congress theme:
*“Learning and practising family
medicine and primary health care
in an era of global change”*

Meet the SAFPJ Team

- Editor-in-Chief:
 - Klaus von Pressentin
- Assistant editors:
 - Indiran Govender
 - Ramprakash Kaswa
 - Arun Nair
 - Mareike Rabe
- Editorial board fellows (registrars):
 - Simon Marcus
 - Mmaphefo Maluleka
- Editorial board





Diversity of
where
Family
Physicians
work!



2025
AOSIS

Objectives of the Session

What we aim to explore together:

- Reflect on the journal's evolution over 45 years
- Examine current editorial practices and innovations
- Envision the journal's future in a digitally transforming world
- Engage with the SAAFP community for feedback and ideas
- Reaffirm our commitment to the journal's three pillars:
 - 🧬 Generating scientific knowledge
 - 🎓 Fostering academic development
 - 👥 Promoting social accountability and advocacy

Call to Engagement

YOUR
VOICE
MATTERS



Help shape the next chapter of the SAFP journal, the official journal of the SAAFP

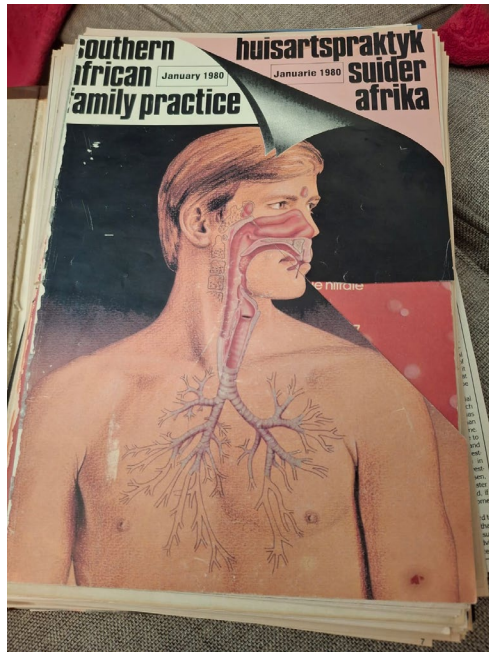


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FAMILY PRACTICE

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PAPERS**

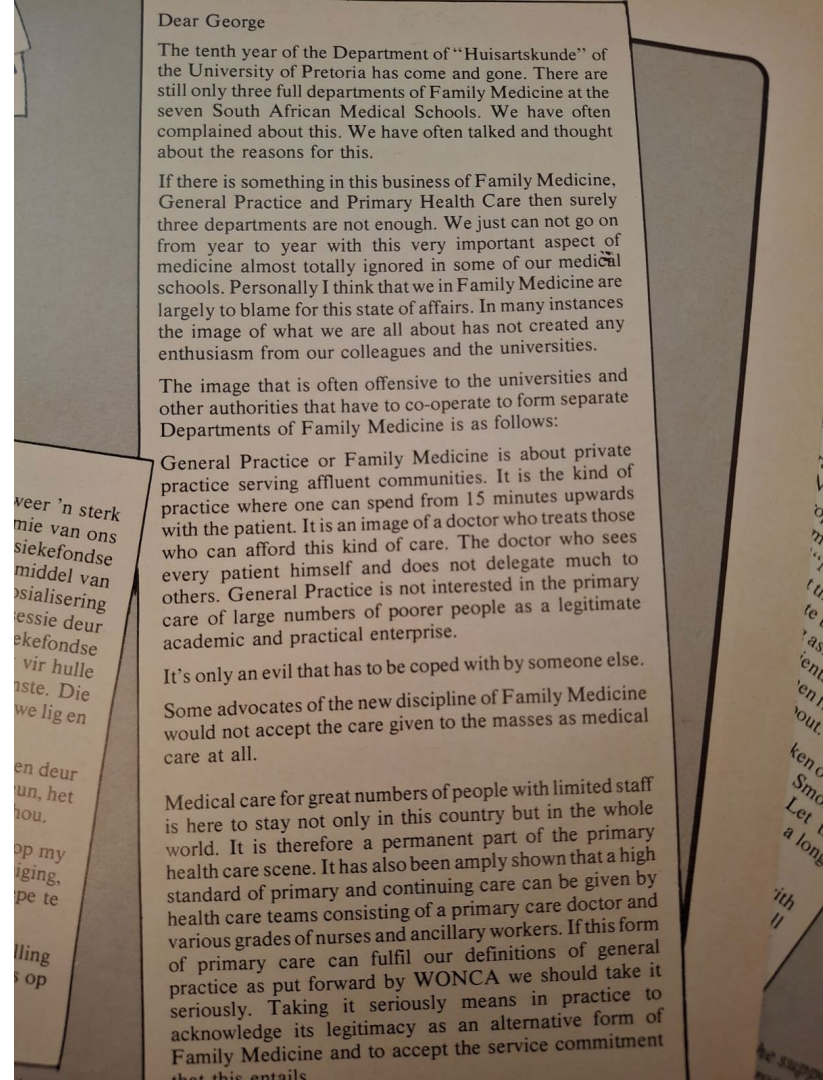
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PAST: Reflecting on 45 Years of SAFP

Klaus von Pressentin



Timeline: Evolution of the SAFP journal (1980–2025)

- 🌐 COPC pioneered by Karks (1950s–60s)
- 🌐 1958: Links with RCGP (UK)
- 🌐 1968: 1st FM professor at UP
- 🌐 1978: Alma Ata declaration

1980–1994

Foundations Amidst Turmoil

- 🌐 Post-apartheid reforms
- 🌐 District Health System
- 🌐 2000: Compulsory CPD

1995–2007

Rebuilding and Recognition

- 🌐 NHI debates & UHC
- 🌐 COVID-19 pandemic
- 🌐 Global PHC recommitment

2008–2025

Expansion and Future-focused

1980: birth of twins

- 📖 1980: SAAFP founded
- 📖 1980: Journal launched

- 📖 1996–98: Interim editors (Jobson, Kirkby)
- 📖 1999: FaMEC established
- 📖 1999: Prof Pierre de Villiers EIC
- 📖 2003: Merger with *Geneeskunde*
- 📖 2005: Transition to online publishing
- 📖 2007: FM recognised as a speciality

- 📖 2012–18: Prof Gboyega Ogunbanjo EIC
- 📖 2018–19: Prof Bob Mash interim editor
- 📖 2019–present: Klaus von Pressentin EIC
- 📖 2020 Transition to AOSIS publisher
- 📖 Journal fully online + eBook

🔗 Prof Sam Fehrsen (1983–1996):
- Stabilised journal
- Promoted holistic care & GP identity as a counter culture

🔗 Prof Pierre de Villiers (1999–2011):
- Revived journal
- Added CPD & research focus

🔗 Prof Gboyega Ogunbanjo (2012–2018):
- Expanded the journal's impact and reach

📄 Prof Sam Fehrsen
(1983–1996)

SAM FEHRSEN

Editor steps down after 13 years at the helm of *SA Family Practice*

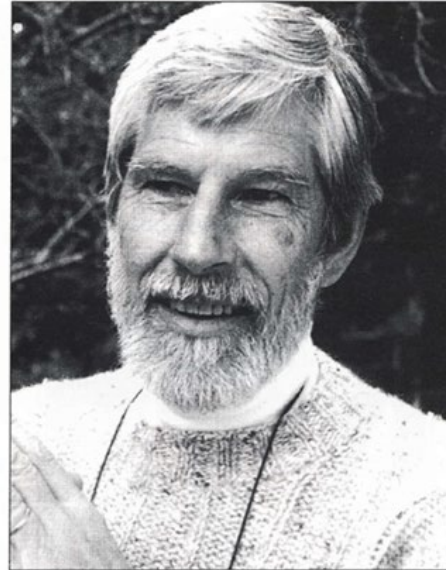
Will the journal be the same without him?

“The philosophy of the journal is now established”, he says.

What is this philosophy?

“I saw the SAFP as a means of helping to build the discipline and, more essentially, of helping to achieve the paradigm shift which many of us believed was necessary for medicine as a whole.”

There can be little doubt that the SAFP has consistently tried, as Fehrsen described it, 'to pull away from the mechanistic towards the holistic view of the general practitioner's work. 'Unless we can start thinking differently about illness,' Fehrsen adds, 'there is no future for the family physician in the broader medical scheme of things.'



Professor Sam Fehrsen – changing roles

'In this way we have tried to elevate research into the holistic nature of GPs' work to the same level as the double blind control trials so dearly beloved of medical science.'

Robbins D. Interview: Sam Fehrsen. *South African Family Practice*. 1996;17(9). <https://safpj.co.za/index.php/safpj/article/download/2363/2979>

📄 Prof Pierre de Villiers (1999–2011)



“It was a long-time dream of mine to become the editor of the journal! I was offered the opportunity to be a guest editor in January 1999, became “hooked”, and offered to do the job. My first editorial described the turmoil of, and hopes for, family medicine at the time.

Our achievements include the following:

- The journal is **accredited** by the National Department of Higher Education and Training, affording universities an opportunity to earn millions of rands every year, by publishing original research in the journal.
- In 2003, a **merger with Geneeskunde** strengthened the journal, resulting in a regular strong CPD section, offered by Medpharm Publications (the new publisher).
- In 2005, the journal became the **first South African scholarly journal to go fully online**, with a full manuscript management system (virtual publishing office)”

De Villiers PJ. The journal: a change at the helm. South African Family Practice. 2012;54(1):4.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/20786204.2012.10874165>

📄 Prof Gboyega
Ogunbanjo
(2012–2018)



Editorials:

<https://safpj.co.za/index.php/safpj/browseSearch/sections/view?sectionId=2>

2018: Air pollution and child health: What can health care professionals do?

2018: National Health Insurance Bill: Is it implementable in its current form?

2018: Publishing in predatory journals: Time for reflections

2017: South Africa and national TB control: Are we making progress?

2017: The health of our educators and HIV/AIDS

2016: COP22 – Marrakech 2016: Is the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol dead?

2016: Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs): Have we lost the battle?

2016: National Health Insurance (NHI): Funding is an issue!

2015: Nanotechnology and Health Care: What are the opportunities and possible risks?



Tracking our output: generating scientific knowledge

EDITORIAL 2023

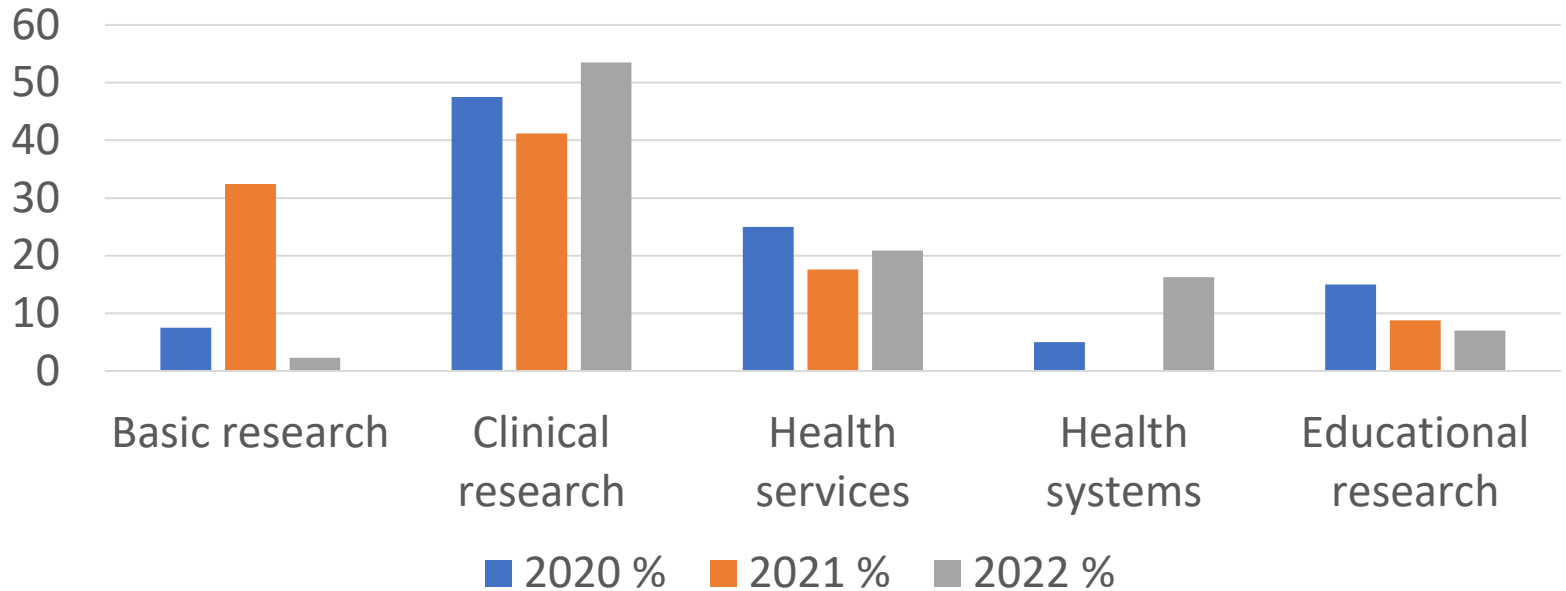
“A 3-year review of primary care research published in the *South African Family Practice* - reflection on the current situation and a clarion call to action”

- The editors performed a cross-sectional descriptive review of the original research published during 2020 - 2022.
- During 2020 - 2022, 117 original research manuscripts were published in total: 40, 34 and 43 per year, respectively.

<https://safpj.co.za/index.php/safpj/article/view/5777>

<https://phcfm.org/index.php/phcfm/article/view/4329/6799>

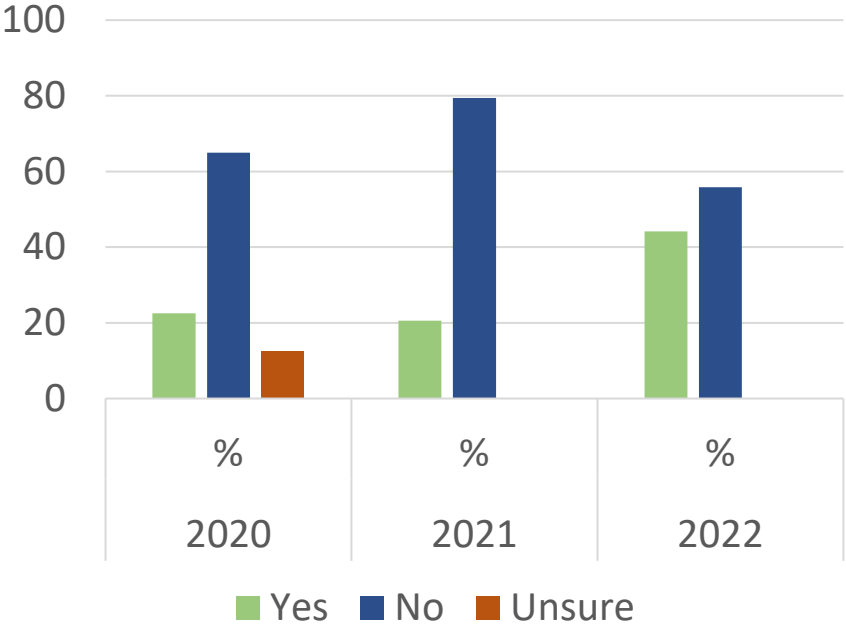
PRIMARY CARE RESEARCH TYPOLOGY



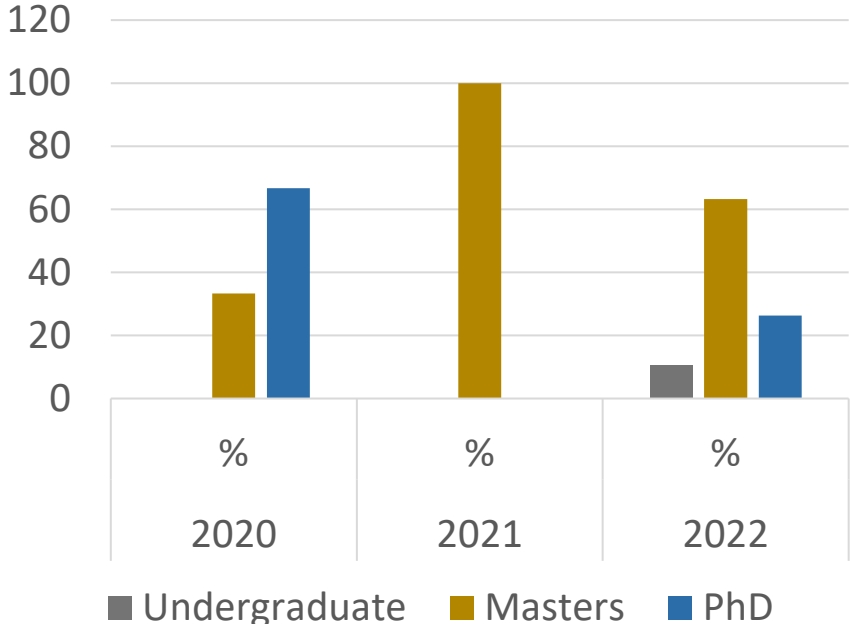
Beasley JW, Starfield B, van Weel C, Rosser WW, Haq CL. Global health and primary care research. *The Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine*. 2007;20(6):518-26.

STUDENT-DRIVEN RESEARCH (37/117)

Student-driven research



Category of research



A journal for our academy: fostering academic development



Strategic input by the SAAFP Exco and SAFP editorial board to ensure benefit to the SAAFP community



CPD: clinical and non-clinical, public and private, rural and urban



Mastering your fellowship since 2015: supporting registrars and supervisors for the national exit examination



Next5 since 2022: facilitating career and role transitions



Growing capacity for authors and reviewers

<https://safpj.co.za/index.php/safpj/browseSearch/sections>

SAFP Journal at 45:

Current Initiatives and Impact

Prof R Kaswa

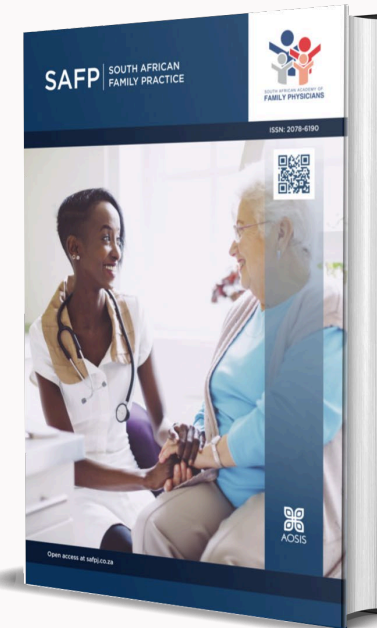
MBBS, MMED, Dip HIV Man, FCFP (SA) PhD (SU).

Department of Family Medicine and Rural Health,

Walter Sisulu University, South Africa.

Assistant editor of South African Family Practice (SAFP) Journal

We invite you
TO SUBMIT



Editorial policies and practices

- SAFPJ endorses and applies the standards of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)
- Important to review the journal's scope and policies: editors, authors, reviewers, and readers
- The journal and its editors do not encourage misconduct or knowingly allow misconduct to take place.
- SAFPJ promotes ethical and responsible research practices in alignment with human and animal rights.
- Plagiarism and fabrication, including Duplicate publication, salami-slicing, etc.
 - Copyright and licensing
 - Competing interests

The SAFPJ's responsibility in the present context

The three key pillars of the SAFP journal.

- Academic training and scholarly development
- Advancing scientific knowledge and the evidence base
- Addressing societal needs – social accountability

Together, these three pillars demonstrate that the SAFP journal is not merely a repository of information but an active agent in shaping healthcare practice, advancing science, and reinforcing medicine's moral obligation to society.

Editorial Fellowship – an example of scholarly development

- The new editorial fellowship initiative was launched at the end of 2024 and is aimed at Family Medicine registrars.
- An editorial fellowship program is an academic or professional training opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the editorial processes of a journal or publication.
 - Participate in editorial writing and peer review.
 - Offer structured mentorship from experienced editors
- **Note:** This editorial fellowship is a stepping stone to a career in academic publishing or editorial leadership designed to nurture the next generation of family medicine and primary care leaders and scholars.

Addressing societal needs

- Social accountability emphasises the responsibility of the journal to address the broader needs of society.
- The journal is tasked with highlighting issues such as health equity, access to care, ethical practice, and the social determinants of health.
- Publishing research and commentary on pressing global health challenges, eg, pandemic readiness, addressing health disparities, and examining human resources for health needs to optimise primary care.
- SAFPJ aims to inform and influence health professions education priorities and ensure that the direction of healthcare remains aligned with the well-being of communities.

- Editorials
- Open forum
- Letters to the editor
- From the President's desk

Challenges in current context

- **Maintaining Quality Amid Speed:** The push for rapid publication
- **Balancing Social Responsibility:** Journals are increasingly expected to address issues such as diversity, inclusivity, climate change, and health inequities
- **Equity in Publishing:** Across all academic campuses, rural vs urban, public vs private and Local vs international contents
- **Predatory Journals:** The rise of unethical publishers offering quick publication for profit threatens scientific integrity, misleading authors and readers alike.

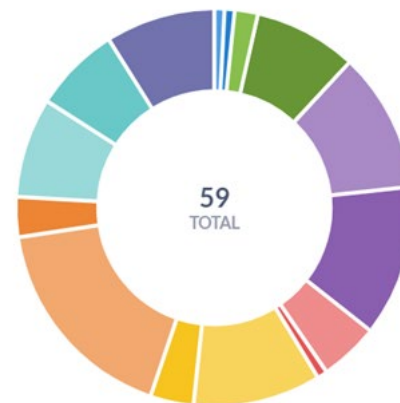
Current journal performance

Monitoring institutional contributions is a DoHET requirement.

2024 vs 2025 (year to date)

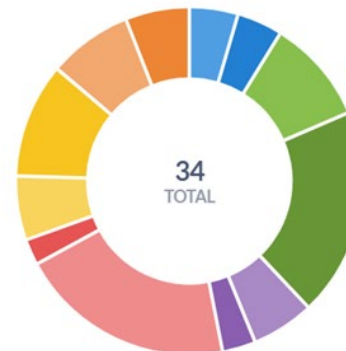
DoHET Units for Published Manuscripts - Previous Calendar Year

DUT	0.565%
NMU	0.565%
NWU	1.695%
Other	8.463%
SMU	11.582%
SUN	12.538%
UCT	4.762%
UFH	0.565%
UFS	10.593%
UJ	3.390%
UKZN	17.881%
UL	3.107%
UNISA	8.192%
UP	7.062%
WITS	9.040%



DoHET Units for Published Manuscripts - Current Calendar Year

NMU	4.41%
Other	4.12%
SMU	9.80%
SUN	19.76%
UCT	5.78%
UJ	2.94%
UKZN	20.59%
UL	2.21%
UNISA	5.88%
UP	10.78%
WITS	7.84%
WSU	5.88%



Data extracted on 5 September 2025



Current journal performance

Note: 'Avg. Time In Review until Accept Decision' includes 'Avg. Review Time until First Decision'

Data extracted on
5 September 2025

46.7

Avg. Review Time First Decision

Avg. Review Time until First Decision

Count Average of Time First Decision



88.14

Avg. Review Time

Avg. Time In Review until Accept Decision

Count Average of Time In Review

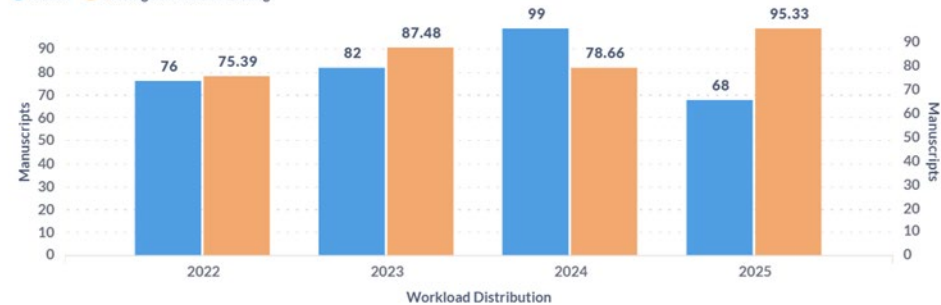


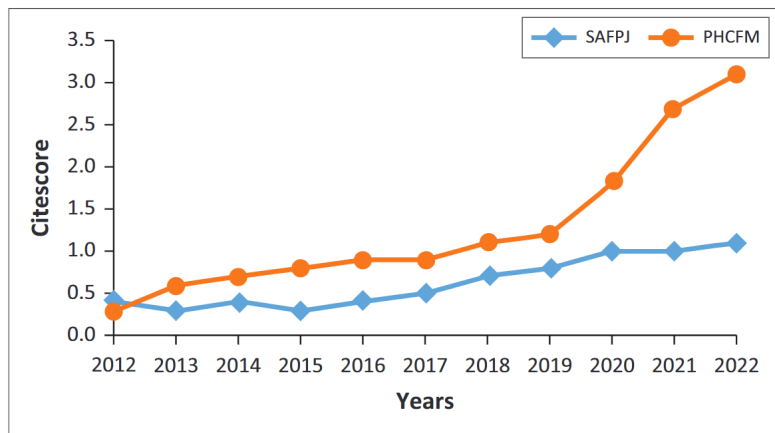
89.94

Avg. Time To Publish

Avg. Time from Acceptance to Publication

Count Average of Time In Editing

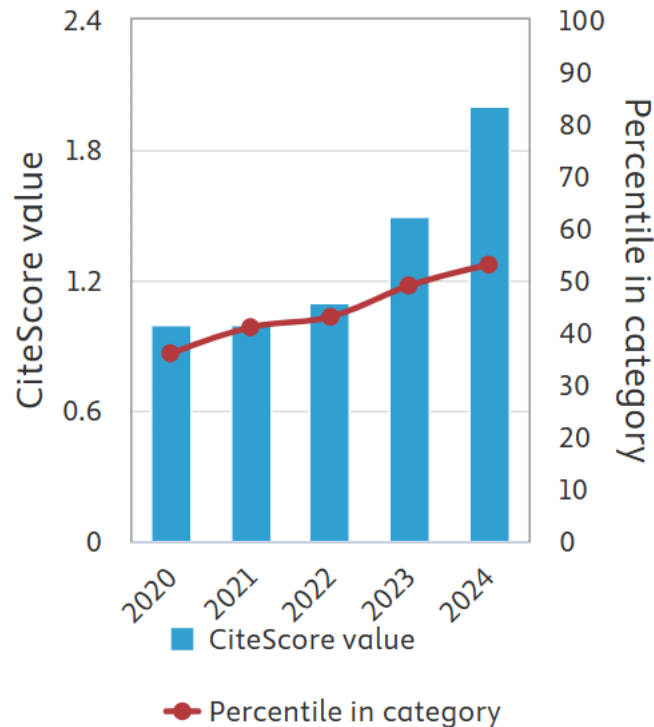




PHCFM, *African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine*; SAFP, *South African Family Practice*.

FIGURE 1: SCOPUS CiteScore for South African Family Practice Journal and African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine 2012–2022.

CiteScore trend



CiteScore CiteScore rank & trend Scopus content coverage

CiteScore 2024 ▼

2.0 = $\frac{577 \text{ Citations } 2021 - 2024}{289 \text{ Documents } 2021 - 2024}$

Calculated on 05 May, 2025

CiteScoreTracker 2025 ⓘ

1.6 = $\frac{426 \text{ Citations to date}}{267 \text{ Documents to date}}$

Last updated on 05 August, 2025 • Updated monthly



SAFP - Shaping the Future of Family Medicine and Primary Care Research

Simon Marcus

INTRODUCTION¹

Transformation in Family Medicine

Family medicine is evolving - changing healthcare needs, technology,

Role of Family Medicine

Accessible, continuous, and comprehensive care - individuals and communities.

Importance of Research

Research drives evidence-based practices and helps address emerging health challenges.

Digital Transformation Impact

Digital tools - dissemination and application of medical knowledge in family medicine.

POTENTIAL AREAS FOR GROWTH AND INNOVATION

Interdisciplinary Collaborations

Effective community care - clinical practice, public health, and social sciences¹

Community-Based Participatory Research

Engaging local populations ensures culturally relevant studies

- Addressing real-world health needs.²

Technology Integration

Electronic records, telemedicine, wearable devices etc.

- Enhance personalized and efficient patient care.
- AI tools impact on decision making ³

Potential Areas for Growth and Innovation

Opportunities under the NHI

- Electronic records integration across facilities
 - Referral system - Continuity of care - Effectively assess practice
- Monitoring the implementation of the NHI¹
 - Assess public-private integration
 - Community participation – responsiveness to local needs
- Assess Innovative Care Models/Approaches
 - AI and decision-making tools
 - Monitoring and assess interventions (e.g., QIP)
 - Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration



Enhancing Journal Relevance and Reach¹

Community outreach²

- Engaging practitioners, educators, students, and researchers
 - Meet community needs and foster ownership.³
 - Opportunity to have your say – 45-year anniversary special collection
 - Identify challenges and propose future directions and strategies
- Surveys and focus groups
 - Identify emerging research priorities within the community.
 - NB for students and junior colleagues
- Recognition
 - Awards and featured articles - celebrate community contributions.
 - Acknowledge and grow peer reviewers⁴





Enhancing Journal Relevance and Reach

Local and international growth

- Tailor content to South African and global challenges¹
 - Journal pertinent to diverse readership
- Grow our citation-based metrics
 - Cite score on the rise

Digital Marketing and Multimedia

- Social media, email newsletters, digital media
 - Amplify the journal's presence and engagement.
- Incorporating video abstracts, infographics, and more
- Encourage researchers to amplify their message
 - Articles, Blogs, Social media, Podcasts²



Digital Transformation in Publishing¹

Integration into Clinical Workflows

- Journal content integrated into point-of-care tools
 - Allows direct access to evidence within clinical workflows.
 - Ensure Clinical Decision Support Systems (CDSS) are locally relevant

AI-Driven Personalized Content

- Artificial intelligence and machine learning personalize article delivery
 - Content that is contextually relevant and specific to interests

Improved Patient Care Outcomes

- Innovations enable more actionable and relevant research,
 - Improve patient care and outcomes.
 - Identify gaps or emerging areas



Challenges of Digital Transformation¹

Ethical AI Implementation

- Concerns with AI in health care - algorithmic bias, transparency, and accountability requiring responsible development.
 - AI generated content – tools to identify
 - Epistemology – where does the knowledge come from
 - AI informed by our context and not just high-resource settings

Digital Equity Challenges

- Unequal access to technology
 - Can worsen health disparities
 - Highlighting the need for inclusive solutions.

Multidisciplinary Approach

- Must balance innovation with ethics and social responsibility
 - Requires collaboration across disciplines.





Conclusion¹

Opportunities for Growth

- The future holds growth and innovation opportunities.

Digital Transformation Embrace

- Embracing digital tools ensures scholarly work leads to healthcare improvement effectively.

Ethical and Social Responsibility

- Addressing ethical AI, data privacy, and equity is essential for responsible healthcare advancement.

Collaboration and Excellence

- Effective implementation and monitoring of the NHI
- Builds a resilient research ecosystem for future healthcare.

THOUGHTS AND REFLECTION

Opening up for dialogue



Ideas to enhance the journal further?

How should the journal continue to evolve to stay relevant?

SUMMARY



Ways of getting involved:

- Reviewer
- Author
- Special collection
- Editorial Fellowship
- Follow the journal updates
- Cover submissions
- Active engagement and feedback, such as CPD and MYF needs

The *South African Family Practice* journal 2026 Special Collection: We invite you to submit

[AOSIS](#) calls on all authors to participate in the [South African Family Practice](#) (SAFP) journal's 2026 special collection that will be published in the open-access scholarly journal. Submit your latest research for consideration, contribute to the open-access content available to everyone, and share your expertise with a wider audience.

Timeline:

- Submissions open: **01 June 2025**
- Submission deadline: **15 October 2025**
- Review process: **Mid-October to end November 2025**
- Expected publication date: **March 2026**

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Thank you

Stay in touch: editor@safpj.co.za

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