

# Gates Foundation to require immediate free access for journal articles



Breaking new ground for the open-access movement, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, a major funder of global health research, plans to require that the researchers it funds publish only in immediate open-access journals.

The [policy](#) doesn't kick in until January 2017; until then, grantees can publish in subscription-based journals as long as their paper is freely available within 12 months. But after that, the journal must be open access, meaning papers are free for anyone to read immediately upon publication. Articles must also be published with a license that allows anyone to freely reuse and distribute the material. And the underlying data must be freely available.

The immediate access requirement goes further than policies of other major biomedical research funders in the United States and Europe. Most encourage their researchers to publish in immediate open-access journals, but allow delayed access after an embargo of 6 to 12 months. (Most subscription-based journals, including *Science*, allow authors to comply with those policies.) The Gates Foundation will also pay the author fees charged by many open-access journals.

“By reinforcing the global health community’s commitment to sharing research data and information, we can accelerate the development of new solutions to tackle infectious diseases, cut maternal and child mortality, and reduce malnutrition in the world’s poorest places,” wrote Trevor Mundel, president of the foundation’s Global Health Division, [on the group’s website on 20 November](#).

The policy is “truly a giant step forward for Open Access policies!!” wrote Heather Joseph, executive director of the open-access advocacy group SPARC in Washington, D.C., in an e-mail to the group’s members.

The Gates Foundation spends about \$900 million a year on its global health programs, mostly on research. That results in roughly 1400 research papers a year, 30% of which now appear in open-access journals, according to foundation communications officer Amy Enright.