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WVU Libraries celebrates International Open-Access Week: School of Medicine's Dr. Piedimonte widens research audience

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In the age of tweets, blogs, YouTube videos, and Facebook postings, people strive to share information with as many as possible and as fast as possible. The academic world is slowly waking up to this new paradigm through publications in open-access journals.

In honor of International Open-Access Week Oct. 19-23, WVU [Libraries](#) recognizes [School of Medicine](#) Dr. Giovanni Piedimonte and his team, who recently made discoveries about how respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) affects infants. They chose to publish their work in PLoS (Public Library of Science) ONE, an open-access journal. That choice made their findings available to anyone with access to the Internet at <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0006444>

"If a paper is accepted, everyone on the planet can access the paper with no charge," Piedimonte said. "They can be in Pakistan or Afghanistan and still be able to read the paper. The audience is enormous."

The goal of Open-Access Week is to inform people about the open-access movement and its positive impact on higher education, research and the general public.

Traditionally, reading the latest research requires academic libraries to pay high subscription fees for electronic journals that are available exclusively to the university community and for paper versions housed on campus. However, more eyes than usual will be able to read WVU's latest research about infant health thanks to how the researchers chose to publish their findings.

Open-access journals are peer-reviewed and provide free, online access to their articles. Rather than charging subscription fees to readers or libraries, they cover their costs through publication fees to authors.

The wider audience maximizes the research impact. In 2008, the British Medical Journal reported that open-access articles received a significantly higher number of downloads from more visitors than their traditional subscription counterparts.

For Piedimonte, in just six weeks, people viewed his research about 630 times and more than 90 people downloaded it.

"The visibility and impact you can achieve by publishing in a good open-access journal like PLoS is far superior to other journals of the same type," Piedimonte said.

Increased visibility helps researchers to fulfill WVU's mission as a land-grant university. In Piedimonte's case, pediatricians throughout West Virginia and the world will better understand a potentially fatal respiratory infection because they can read the article.

"What if you are a physician who works in an underserved area or in a rural area? The open-access medium allows these people to be in touch with cutting edge research in clinical medicine in real time in a way they wouldn't be able to otherwise," Piedimonte said.

Dr. Richard Crout, associate dean for research in the WVU School of Dentistry and a professor in the Department of Periodontics, has witnessed the effect of a lack of access to new research on a trip to the Soviet Union. Crout talked with a doctor in Kiev, Ukraine, who had spent four years studying an issue not knowing that it had already been resolved.

"We all can learn from what other people are doing," Crout said. "If it's something similar, we work together."

WVU and the WVU Libraries have actively advocated for open-access publishing. WVU Libraries, the Office of Information Technology, and the Office of Academic Affairs and Research collaborated to establish an institutional repository containing Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs), Electronic undergraduate Honors Theses (EHTs) and the Electronic Scholarly Research Archives (ESRA), a faculty research portal.

To encourage open-access publishing, the WVU Libraries purchased institutional memberships in BioMed Central and Public Library of Science which reduce the required publication fees for WVU faculty researchers. The Libraries also negotiated favorable terms for WVU authors in Oxford University Press open-access journals.

"We're interested in improving access to research," Libraries Dean Frances O'Brien said. "We know these issues are complex

and it will take a lot of people working together to change the system, but I think it's an appropriate direction for a land-grant uni

International Open-Access Week runs through Friday, Oct. 23. For more information, <http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/open-access>

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