

# Instructions for Authors

*SHAJ*'s mission is to be a forum for Somali academic institutions, professionals of the health services system and their international partners to publish health research on the Somali experience and share evidence-based solutions that improve the health of the population. *SHAJ* aims to build a health research culture transcending across the health system in Somalia. *SHAJ* welcomes different types of articles and invites authors to observe the respective requirements and recommendations listed below.

## Article Types

**Original Research:** An Original Research Article (up to 6000 words) follows a strict structure: Background, Objectives, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, References and with added paragraphs like Funding, Acknowledgement, Ethical considerations, and Author contributions. *SHAJ* publishes articles based on quantitative, qualitative, or mixed designs, and authors should clarify what is new knowledge and what actions are called for following the findings.

**Short Communications:** A short communication (up to 1500 words) presents important preliminary observations, results and data from pilot studies, or side issues/secondary findings in a larger study that do not warrant publication as a full paper.

**Study Design:** These types of articles (up to 6000 words) are intended to be methodological papers presenting the design, rationale and aims, as well as hypotheses and background data of, for example, a randomized controlled study, a longitudinal/cohort study or an intervention study. This type of article sets the scene and could be referenced in forthcoming original research papers arising from the studies.

**Education:** These articles (up to 4000 words) will present the design, implementation and evaluation of educational initiatives, including the use of digital tools, to improve quality and outcome of basic and higher medical education as well as efforts to increase competence and performance of public health and healthcare service staff.

**Capacity Building:** Capacity building articles (up to 4000 words) are published to document how research dealing with major public health issues has developed in terms of infrastructure, human resources and capacity. These articles should reflect how partnerships and collaborations are established and built over time, and how research capacities can be built and sustained with reference to the Somali situation and similar fragile contexts.

**Reviews:** *SHAJ* welcomes literature reviews (up to 6000 words) including systematic and scoping reviews on health, prevention, diagnostics and services of public health importance. *SHAJ* also considers literature reviews in the form of narrative reviews, syntheses, etc. The systematic review is defined by [The Cochrane Collaboration](#) as a review that has a clearly formulated research question, uses explicit systematic methods to identify, select and critically appraise relevant research, and synthesizes data from studies that are included in the review. Statistical methods in the form of a meta-analysis may complement a systematic review. When submitting a systematic review and/or a meta-analysis, authors are encouraged to complete the [PRISMA checklist](#) as supporting information.

**Guidelines:** *SHAJ* publishes guidelines (up to 4000 words) of relevance for public health and health care services in Somalia and other fragile states. Guidelines should be based on scientific evidence while accounting for possible conflicts of interests.

**Perspectives:** *SHAJ* will also welcome the publication of reports and narratives (up to 4000 words) from programmes and activities of high public health relevance which may not fulfil the formal criteria for the above categories.

**Debates:** *SHAJ* will publish Debate articles (up to 2000 words) with an aim to create a platform for critical reflection about ongoing global/public health issues and policies of relevance for Somalia and other fragile states.

**Commentaries:** *SHAJ* welcomes brief and more informal articles (up to 2000 words) presenting opinions, viewpoints, reports and observations on current events and developments of public health relevance as well as book reviews

**PhD Outlines:** This is a new category and option for publishing in *SHAJ*. It is an opportunity for registered Somali PhD-students at a university or university college to share their PhD plans in the form of a brief outline (up to 4,000 words) setting the background scene and stating their personal motivation as well as the scientific rationales for the PhD work. The article should also specify the aims and describe and motivate the choice of methods for either the full PhD plan or part of it. The author should include a discussion on steps to ensure that the plan is feasible to carry out. A concluding section should discuss expected findings and implications from the studies. A suggested and more detailed structure of a PhD Outline article can be found [here](#).

**PhD Syntheses:** Somali researchers who have recently defended their PhD theses on a health topic, are invited to submit a synthesis article based on their thesis work (up to 6000 words). PhD theses are often based on a set of articles synthesized into a ‘cover story’ of about 30-50 pages. Some ‘cover stories’ provide excellent reviews of a research area but they seldom reach beyond the host institution or the close collaborators and examiners. Further condensing this work into a PhD Synthesis may also serve as an opportunity for emerging researchers to publish their first post-doctoral paper as a sole author. A suggested and more detailed structure of a PhD Synthesis article can be found [here](#).

**Case Studies:** *SHAJ* also welcomes clinical and health services case reports (up to 2000 words) of general and public health importance.

**Editorials:** Editorials are in principle written by the *SHAJ* editorial management but may occasionally be commissioned to invited expertise.

**Obituaries:** *SHAJ* invites suggestions for obituaries from members of its circle of stakeholders and readers.

## Manuscript Requirements

**Manuscript length:** *SHAJ* has no strict upper limit for manuscript lengths but authors are advised to follow the recommendations stated above for different types of articles. The word limits exclude references, tables and figures, though authors should comply with a maximum of six tables and/or figures in their manuscript. Major deviations from the recommended word

length must be justified in the covering letter. Over-long manuscripts are likely to be rejected or returned for major revisions.

**Manuscript formatting:** Manuscripts may be supplied as single or multiple Word files. Figures and tables can be placed within the text or submitted as separate documents. Figures should be of sufficient resolution to enable refereeing.

Insert row numbers and page numbers for the entire manuscript. Line space should be 1½. Do not justify right margins.

All manuscripts must contain the essential elements needed for their evaluation: abstract, author affiliation, figures, tables, funder information, and references. Further details may be requested upon acceptance.

References should be structured according to the **Vancouver system** where articles are referred to in the text by consecutive numbers within brackets. If a reference has more than six authors the first six are entered followed by et.al. Author name(s), journal or book title, article or chapter title, year of publication, volume and issue (where appropriate) and page numbers are essential. All bibliographic entries must contain a corresponding in-text citation. The addition of DOI (Digital Object Identifier) numbers is recommended but not essential.

Spelling can be US or UK English so long as usage is consistent.

**Title page:** Organize the title page in the following way: 1) title of manuscript, 2) short running title, 3) name of author(s), 4) affiliations for all authors, including name of institution(s) and department(s), 5) email addresses of all authors and 5) name and full postal address of the corresponding author who also acts as 'guarantor' for all parts of the manuscript. The corresponding author's institution, postal and email addresses are displayed in the article PDF and the online article. Please note: the submitting author must also enter the names and contact information for all co-authors during the submission process.

The title should be informative and accurate and at the same time trigger the interest of the reader. The title page should also include a separate word count of the abstract and manuscript (excluding references, tables and figures). Please include 5-10 keywords that capture central aspects of the article.

**Abstract:** Articles must include an abstract of up to 300 words. It should provide sufficient information for a reader to be able to decide whether or not to proceed to the full text and should not generally consist of sentences cut and pasted from the manuscript. For Original and Review Articles the abstract should follow the structure: Background, Objectives, Methods, Results, and Conclusions. Abstracts for other types of articles may be unstructured.

Please note that *SHAJ*'s policy is that all published articles shall have a Somali Summary (or when relevant a Somali translation of the abstract). Authors will be requested to supply a text in Somali for this purpose when a manuscript has been approved for publication

**Manuscript sections:** Original and review articles should follow the layout: Background, Objectives, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion. Other types of articles may have different structures.

**Section headings:** Please do not number section headings. Use a maximum of three levels of headings made clear by indicators, e.g., capitals, italics, bold, etc.

**Tables:** Tables should present new information rather than duplicating what is in the text. Readers should be able to interpret the table without reference to the text. Please supply editable files. Ensure that all the tables have been formatted correctly. Tables should have titles, column/row headings, and footnotes if applicable. Ensure that all parts of the tables fit within the page margins. If necessary, split large tables into two or more, but ensure column/row headings are provided on each page. Very large tables may be better presented as on-line supplementary material. Authors are encouraged to use one decimal point for percentages, and three decimal places for p-values (note  $p=0.000$  is not acceptable; instead write  $p<0.001$ ).

**Figures:** If the manuscript is accepted for publication, please supply figures/graphics/images in at least 300 dpi files. Figures should be saved as JPEG, TIFF, PostScript or EPS files. All charts (bar, pie, column, etc.) should be two dimensional, unless three dimensions are required to present the data. If the figures/graphics/images have been taken from sources not copyrighted by the author, it is the author's sole responsibility to secure the rights from the copyright holder to reproduce those figures/graphs/images for both worldwide print and web publication. All reproduction costs charged by the copyright holder must be borne by the author. When figures/graphics/images are reproduced, a parenthesis should be added to the figure legend thus: (Reproduced with permission from xxx.)

**End materials:** Please ensure you supply all end matter sections required in the following order: Acknowledgments, Author contributions, Disclosure statement, Ethics and consent, Funding information, Paper context and ORCID identifiers. If one or more of these headings don't apply, please use N/A.

- *Acknowledgments* All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an acknowledgments section. Examples of those who might be acknowledged include a person who provided purely technical help, writing assistance, or a department chairperson who provided only general support. Financial and material support should also be acknowledged.

- *Authors' contributions* *SHAJ* requests its authors to comply with authorship criteria as defined by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) in its requirements for authorship. The contributions of each author should be revealed clearly and will be published in the article. If the study uses primary data that were collected by local researcher(s) their involvement as co-authors should be encouraged. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) recommends that authorship be based on the following four criteria:

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
2. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
3. Final approval of the version to be published; AND
4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

See [here](#) for further information on the authorship criteria.

- **Disclosure statement** Authors are responsible for disclosing financial support from industry or other conflicts of interest that might bias the interpretation of results. This does not include salaries paid to authors by institutions to which the authors are affiliated. All authors should complete the ICJME Competing Interests form. All the forms should be compressed as a single file, and uploaded as a supplementary file during the submission process. The ICJME Competing Interests form can be downloaded [here](#). If you have no interests to declare, please state this (suggested wording: The authors report no conflicts of interest). [Read more on declaring conflicts of interest](#).

- **Ethics and consent** When reporting experiments on patients or population surveys, please indicate whether the procedures followed were approved by the local ethics committee and/or in accordance with [the Helsinki Declaration](#) of 1975, as revised in 2008. All other studies with direct involvement of human beings should also have ethical approvals and clear statements on how the ethical issues have been considered and resolved in the study. In case no ethical issues prevail in human studies, the authors should provide a motivation.

- **Funding information** Please supply all details required by your funding and grant-awarding bodies.

- **Paper context** All articles in *SHAJ*, except editorials, commentaries and obituaries should carry a short paragraph (maximum 75 words) that helps the reader to understand where you started from (what was already known), what the paper adds to the topic (what's new), and what the implications of the paper are (e.g., what action needs to be taken). You cannot say a lot in 75 words, so it is important to choose words and phrases carefully! Do not use bullet points, abbreviations or symbols - simply compose a clear text that contextualizes the paper.

- **ORCID identifiers** Where available, please also include [ORCID identifiers](#) for all authors.

## Our Review Process

We are committed to peer-review integrity and upholding the highest standards of review. We adhere to publication standard and research ethics principles of Open Access Journal system at Umeå University Library that is technical publisher of *SHAJ*.

We aim to operate a robust and fair peer review process to ensure that content is always of the highest standard. We adhere to the Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE), a charity dedicated to promoting the integrity of peer-reviewed publications in science. We use OJS, the Open Journal System to peer review manuscript submissions. Please note that *SHAJ* uses [Crossref™ Similarity Check](#) to screen papers for unoriginal material. By submitting your paper to *SHAJ* you are agreeing to originality checks during the peer-review and production processes. *SHAJ* adheres to a strict Anti-bribery and Corruption Code.

Editors will screen each submitted manuscript to *SHAJ*. The different types of publications should be of relevance for a fragile state like Somalia or similar settings. Manuscripts may be rejected directly by the Editor or in consultation with external experts, if the manuscript does not pass the originality detection test, is out of the scope of *SHAJ*, the study lacks scientific originality, the manuscript does not include a specific research question or a clear statement

of intent or if there are flaws in the study design, data collection or data analysis that cannot be corrected.

If the study uses primary data that were collected by local researcher(s) but does not include any local researcher(s) as co-authors a reasonable explanation should be given.

If the manuscript is not structured as required or has poor English grammar, style, and syntax it may be sent back to authors for editing before sent for peer review.

When manuscripts have passed through the initial screening, they are subjected to rigorous peer review to ensure that the research published is 'good science'. Manuscripts are sent out for review electronically, and all correspondence takes place via e-mail. Manuscripts are sent to at least two independent reviewers.

*SHAJ* has a 'single blind' review process which means that the peer reviewers' identities remain unknown to the authors, but the authors identities are known to the reviewers. When the editor is satisfied that the manuscript has been sufficiently reviewed, a decision letter is emailed to the author(s).

Editors can make one of the following recommendations for authors to consider:

1. Accept manuscript (no revision requested)
2. Conditional acceptance (will be accepted following requested minor changes)
3. Minor revision (can be accepted after minor revisions)
4. Major revision (can be accepted or rejected following major revisions and another peer review round)
5. Reject with option to re-submit (the revisions extend beyond a 'major revision' and the paper will be re-considered as a new submission.)
6. Reject manuscript - unsound (the manuscript is sub-standard)
7. Reject manuscript - unsuitable (the manuscript is better suited for another journal).

To facilitate rapid publication, authors are given two weeks for minor revisions and four weeks for major revisions, with possible extension, if requested by the authors. Late submissions of revised manuscripts may cause rejection. Some papers undergo more than one round of peer review and revision before the editor makes a final decision.