



## Acta Orthopaedica Belgica: Entering the Digital Era

For more than nine decades, *Acta Orthopaedica Belgica* has served as a scientific platform for the Belgian orthopaedic community. Since its foundation, the journal has chronicled the evolution of orthopaedic surgery in Belgium and beyond, documenting advances in clinical practice, surgical innovation, biomechanics, and musculoskeletal research. Through the contributions of generations of authors, reviewers, and editors, the journal has reflected the intellectual vitality of Belgian orthopaedics and its strong connections with the international scientific community.

The history of the journal parallels the development of orthopaedic surgery itself. Early volumes recorded the emergence of modern fracture care, reconstructive surgery, and the expanding role of imaging and biomechanics. Over time, the journal has continued to publish work that reflects the changing landscape of our discipline: from classical surgical techniques to contemporary topics such as minimally invasive surgery, biologics, digital technologies, and multidisciplinary patient care. Throughout these transformations, *Acta Orthopaedica Belgica* has remained committed to its central mission: the rigorous dissemination of orthopaedic knowledge that ultimately improves patient care.

Scientific publishing, however, is undergoing a profound transformation. The ways in which clinicians and researchers access medical literature have changed dramatically. Increasingly, readers discover and consult articles through digital databases, institutional subscriptions, and online search platforms. Mobile devices, electronic libraries, and citation-management tools have become integral to daily clinical and academic practice. For many readers, the primary interaction with scientific literature now occurs online rather than through printed journals.

In light of these developments, the Editorial Board has carefully evaluated the future format of the journal. After thoughtful consideration, we have decided that *Acta Orthopaedica Belgica* will transition to an electronic-only publication format, beginning with the upcoming volume.

This transition reflects both practical realities and strategic opportunities. Electronic publication allows for faster dissemination of new research, improved accessibility for readers worldwide, and greater visibility through indexing and digital search platforms. It also enables the integration of supplementary materials—such as high-resolution imaging, datasets, and multimedia content—that increasingly accompany contemporary orthopaedic research. At the same time, moving away from print production contributes to more sustainable and efficient use of resources.

Importantly, the transition to an electronic format does not change the fundamental mission or editorial standards of the journal. The principles that have guided *Acta Orthopaedica Belgica* since its inception remain unchanged: rigorous peer review, scientific integrity, and the publication of high-quality clinical and experimental research. The journal will continue to serve as a forum for both Belgian and international orthopaedic scholarship.

We recognize that the printed journal has long been part of the professional landscape of orthopaedic surgery in Belgium. For many colleagues, receiving the journal in print has been a familiar and valued tradition. The decision to discontinue print distribution was therefore not taken lightly. Nevertheless, the Editorial Board believes that embracing digital publication is necessary to ensure the continued relevance and visibility of the journal in the evolving ecosystem of scientific communication.

Looking forward, this transition provides an opportunity to further strengthen the journal. A fully digital format will allow us to broaden our readership, enhance the dissemination of Belgian orthopaedic research, and engage more actively with the international scientific community. It also opens the door to new forms of scientific communication and educational content that were not possible in a traditional print format.

The continued success of *Acta Orthopaedica Belgica* ultimately depends on the engagement of the orthopaedic community it serves. We therefore warmly invite our colleagues—clinicians, researchers, and trainees alike—to continue contributing their work, expertise, and critical insight to the journal. Through these collective efforts, the journal will remain a vibrant platform for orthopaedic science and education.

As *Acta Orthopaedica Belgica* enters this new chapter, we do so with respect for the journal's rich history and with confidence in its future. The medium may evolve, but the mission remains unchanged: to support the advancement of orthopaedic knowledge and the improvement of musculoskeletal care.

On behalf of the Editorial Board,

Frank Plasschaert  
*Editor-in-Chief, Acta Orthopaedica Belgica*