Response from the Editor-in-Chief to Siddiqui and Chambers' letter

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In their letter, Siddiqui and Chambers argue that sexual violence is an important public health concern and that CJPH should publish more research about sexual violence as we are the main and most reliable source of information for public health practitioners and researchers in Canada. In their review of published CJPH articles since 1997 (a 20-year span), they note that we have published 29 articles on the topic, and they identify numerous gaps in the themes covered by those papers.

First, I want to thank Siddiqui and Chambers for their interest in CJPH and our publications. This type of interaction and feedback from our readers is important for the Editorial Board. Second, this letter begs the question as to what constitutes a sufficient number of papers in any specific domain for a generalist publication such as ours. Given that we publish more or less 100 articles per year, of which about 90% are research papers, the 29 published studies identified over a 20-year period roughly represent 1.5% of all published studies. Is this enough considering the burden of diseases represented by sexual violence in Canada and the quality and quantity of research conducted on this issue in comparison with other public health issues? This is, of course, a question that cannot be answered! Third, like all scientific journals, we mostly publish papers that are submitted to us unsolicited. The “small”

number of papers on sexual violence that were published in our pages might also be a reflection of the fact that researchers in that field do not frame sexual violence as a public health issue.

As a journal, CJPH has never really used the tool of special calls to showcase a specific public health problem. Indeed, to my knowledge, previous Editors-in-Chief have not issued special calls. It is just under my watch that we have started doing so and for very broad issues of general interest, such as qualitative research or the value of public health. We have also used special calls for developing joint projects with professional associations that are closely related to public health, such as the Canadian Society for Epidemiology and Biostatistics or the Canadian Association of Public Health Dentistry. The real question this letter raises is how can CJPH better serve the public health community in Canada and worldwide. We will closely examine how topic-specific calls can achieve this goal. In the meanwhile, there is always the possibility for any organized group to propose a special supplementary issue of the journal, which is another tool for raising the profile of a public health topic.

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