

EDITORIAL

Continuing the Evolution: Expanding JMSMA's Scope and Two Calls for Mississippi

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One year into JMSMA's all-digital era, the editorial team has continued building. Over the past year, we have expanded the categories of scholarship the journal accepts, strengthened the Health Policy section, and announced two special issues for late 2026 on subjects central to Mississippi's public health agenda. Our hope is that physicians, academics, and public health professionals across the state will increasingly consider JMSMA a home for the work they undertake to document, analyze, and share scholarship addressing Mississippi's most pressing health challenges.

Two new submission categories have been added this year. The ***Epidemiological Surveillance Report*** is intended for descriptive analyses of trends in health conditions, behaviors, risk factors, or health system metrics relevant to Mississippi. These reports are not considered traditional hypothesis-testing studies; their purpose is to characterize what is happening in a population, in a region, or over time, with the methodological transparency that makes such characterizations rigorous. The ***Program Report*** is intended for clinical programs, public health initiatives, quality improvement projects, and community partnership initiatives that have recently been implemented in Mississippi. Much of the work improving the health of Mississippians does not lend itself to formal study designs, and the Program Report gives that work a structured home. Both categories require an abstract and follow specific formatting standards described on our [For Authors page](#).

The Health Policy section, launched in 2024, has been expanded substantially. It now publishes Policy Surveillance articles, which systematically map laws, regulations, or policies as the primary unit of analysis; Policy Analyses, which examine specific frameworks, legislative proposals, or comparative state analyses; Policy Briefs, which translate evidence into actionable recommendations for decision makers; and Legislative, Regulatory, and Medicolegal Updates, which are editorially commissioned contextual analyses of consequential legal and administrative developments in Mississippi. The distinction between Policy Surveillance and Epidemiological Surveillance is intentional and useful: one tracks rules,

the other tracks outcomes. Authors with policy-focused original research, commentaries, special articles, or reviews are encouraged to follow those respective guidelines and indicate Health Policy as the submission category.

These expanded categories arrive at a timely moment for Mississippi where several health domains would benefit from rigorous documentation and analysis. The first is maternal and infant health. In August 2025, the Mississippi State Department of Health [declared a public health emergency on infant mortality](#), responding to a 2024 statewide infant mortality rate of 9.7 per 1,000 live births, the highest rate the state has recorded in over ten years and roughly twice the current national figure. Racial disparities are pronounced, with the rate among Black infants reaching 15.2 per 1,000 in 2024.¹ JMSMA's September/October 2026 special issue on Maternal and Infant Health is an important opportunity to bring the full breadth of the journal's expanded scope to bear on a domain that is now under formal emergency response. The submission deadline is July 31, 2026.

The second is substance use disorder and overdose prevention. The November/December 2026 special issue addresses a domain in which Mississippi is operating across many fronts at once. The state legislature has allocated opioid settlement funds to support interventions that approach the problem from multiple angles, including prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery support. Active federal investment in Mississippi flows through agencies that include the CDC, HRSA, SAMHSA, and NIH, supporting research, surveillance, and programmatic work across the state. National overdose trends are shifting, and the Mississippi trajectory does not necessarily mirror them.² The case for a dedicated venue to document and analyze what is happening here is therefore strong. The submission deadline is August 30, 2026.

This year also brought a quieter but consequential advance in the journal's scholarly infrastructure. Through the Mississippi State Medical Association, JMSMA has become a member of Crossref, the nonprofit organization that administers Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) for scholarly publishing. Articles published in JMSMA will now be assigned a DOI, a persistent link that resolves to the work regardless of where it is later accessed or how the journal's hosting may change over time. For authors, this means their scholarship will be more readily discoverable, more accurately cited, and more durably preserved within the indexed research record. It is a modest technical step, but one that places work published here on the same footing as scholarship in established national journals and reinforces JMSMA's standing as a permanent part of the scholarly literature.

Authors interested in submitting to either special issue should indicate their interest in the cover letter at the time of submission. Detailed guidelines for all article types, including the two new categories and the four article types within the Health Policy section, are available at

<https://jmsma.scholasticahq.com/for-authors>. As always, all submissions undergo a rigorous internal and external peer review process, and we welcome feedback from authors and readers as we continue to develop the journal as a leading platform for scholarship dedicated to the health of Mississippians.

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Disclosure

Anthropic's Claude was used to assist with drafting and editing this editorial. The author reviewed and approved all content, including factual claims and citations, and retains full responsibility for the final text.

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