

Editorial:

ESTABLISHING MEDICAL JOURNALISM: NEED OF THE HOUR FOR PAKISTAN

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Scope of medical journalism extends from being an authentic source to get information about new modalities, drugs, experimental trials, vaccines, surgical procedures and management guidelines in health care professionals to the general public.¹History of medical journalism dates back to 18th century when for the first time proceedings of meetings of doctors were published leading to the development of general medical journals. With emergence of evidence based medicine, increase demand of medical journals has been felt worldwide to disseminate scientific information.² Further advancement in scientific knowledge of health care professionals led to establishment of specific medical journals in specific fields of medicine.³

Globally thousands of medical journals are published annually.⁴To have a greater impact of their findings, researchers want to publish their data in internationally recognized journals having greater citations.⁵With globalization, increasing use of social media, improved access of internet facilities and creation of health bloggers have tremendously increased the importance of information transfer in the form of original articles, systemic reviews, meta-analysis and case series. Internationally it is being evaluated that medical journals have published papers with poor scientific knowledge, ghost authors, conflict of interest and influenced with pharmaceutical industry.³ High annual subscription fees can make access of journals difficult.

Jonathan et al. published an article with the objective to assess that what were the reasons that some countries publish more articles in renowned and high ranking journals than others and it was found that national research funding and proficiency in English make distinguished contributions in publications of original articles in medical journals.⁷

Publication is the most crucial part of scientific process which is affected by study design, sample size, sampling techniques and use of appropriate statistical analysis.⁸ Research with highest impact factor is published in Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland and Netherland. Asian countries have low publication rates as compared to developed nations.⁷Some of the high ranking journals specify some place for contribution from developing countries too.⁹To further support the process of publication, International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) have devised uniform guidelines to be followed by all manuscripts before submissions.¹⁰

In 2006, 51 medical journals were registered with Pak Medi Net, Pakistan's first online database of Pakistani medical journals.¹¹Currently this number reaches to 80 different medical journals. Higher Education commission in Pakistan gives W category to only three journals. Rest of the journals either belongs to Y or Z category. Majority of these journals are not even indexed with Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.¹² There are issues with timely publications of these journals and selection of quality papers too. Fabrication of results and plagiarism are other issues that point fingers towards integrity of medical journals.¹³

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The need of the hour is to develop new medical journals which follow all the scientific and ethical guidelines before publication of manuscripts. It is further to emphasize that we need to publish and contribute towards scientific knowledge. We have to imprint our presence by contributing in medical journalism. We need to show the authenticity of our work based on sound clinical and academic grounds. Journal of Akhtar Saeed Medical & Dental College is a small contribution towards development of medical journalism in Pakistan with the intention to publish quality papers following international guidelines. As part of the team, contributing towards development of this journal, I wish that this journal proves its worth in years to come.

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