NEED FOR INSTITUTIONAL MEDICAL RESEARCH JOURNALS

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After World War II the commercial value of medical research became realized. In 1945, President Roosevelt of USA asked Vannevar Bush, Director R & D for a Report to move forward in this field; (Science, The Endless Frontier - Summary of Report). Addressing the issue, the report states “How do we increase scientific capital? First, we must have plenty of men and women trained in science, for upon them depends both the creation of new knowledge and its application to practical purposes. Second, we must strengthen the centers of basic research which are principally the colleges, universities, and research institutes. These institutions provide the environment which is most conducive to the creation of new scientific knowledge and least under pressure for immediate, tangible results”.

The report also included the importance of research in biological and medical sciences. Universities were encouraged to promote the research by providing them with funding to be utilized by its faculty and researchers. The paradigm shift of post-Flexner era towards excellence in medical education completely overwhelmed the medical faculty including the clinicians. However, after the preferential accord to research, the same faculty of medical schools and hospitals shifted their focus to research and generation of funds through private practice. Faculty priorities in research were obviously reflected high in the publications and exponential growth of number of research journals. Although Index Medicus started in 1879 and MEDLARS in 1964, however the online MEDLINE started functioning in 1971. One can compare the 239 journals indexed in MEDLINE in 1971 to 5,500 in 2011. Increase in usage of online article retrieval per annum can be estimated by looking at the figures between 2010-2011 which was 0.2 billion. On average there were 3 million hits per day on Pubmed in 2013. Worldwide the promotion of institutionalized journals became the common practice. The publication quality was also taken into account resulting into a number of accreditation processes. The original researches obviously took higher credit as compared to any other. Regarding the medical educational institutions, the credit and promotion were attached / linked to the number of publication in the faculty.

The Lancet was the first published medical research journal commenced in 1823, followed by BMJ in 1840 and JAMA in 1883.

Pakistan at its inception in 1947 had no medical research journal. The first of its kind to be introduced was Journal of Pakistan Medical Association (JPMA) published in 1951. However it took nearly 24 years when JPMA was in Index Medicus. The number of journals listed in Pakmedinet is 78, out of which 61 are accredited by the Pakistan Medical & Dental Council (PM&DC) and 39 by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan. There are at the moment only 06 medical journals from Pakistan indexed in Medline. However the Impact Factors of three indexed medical journals from Pakistan range from 0.231 to 0.414 only, while the other three are not mentioned in ISI Impact Factor list 2014.

Research publications in Pakistan have grown by 54% from year 2008 to 2012. Because of increased research interest related to increased postgraduate programs in medical universities, the pressure on existing medical journals has
also grown leading to long waiting queues for publication. The online submissions to journals has created further difficulty where the novice writer does not have an off the record chance to reform his manuscript. The institutions publishing their own journals have the relevant human resource, who in addition to improving the capacity building of medical writing, motivate their institutional colleagues. The statistical and bibliographic help that is ever so important in write-up may also be available readily. In case of submission to the journals outside institutions, researchers in Pakistan may face high rejection or deferral rate. 

Rehman Medical Institute (RMI) was commissioned in 2002 as a Cardiac Care oriented hospital but soon developed into a general tertiary care hospital. It has further grown to develop a second tertiary care hospital and five academic undergraduate institutions including Rehman Medical College (RMC); the institution also trains significant number of postgraduates in different fields of health. In recent years, a sizeable number of publications from its faculty have appeared in medical research journals. This growth has had a significant support by the well-developed Department of Medical Research at RMC. A large number of projects are in progress and therefore the need to publish a journal of its own by the name of Journal of RMI was felt for. Due declaration has been accorded to it by the relevant department of Govt. of Pakistan.

The author’s previous experience of being the pioneer editor of three notable journals including one indexed journal ‘Journal of Ayub Medical College’ (J Ayub Med Coll Abbottabad) encouraged him to develop a team and launch the present journal with its aspirations and expectations of producing quality publications regularly from all over the globe rather than just locally. Manuscript submission from all over the world shall be welcomed to contribute to the growth of the Journal and dissemination to a diverse professional forum.

Launching a new journal is no piece of cake, needs burning of midnight oil and is a “bittersweet” experience. It requires a dedicated team with expertise in management, manuscript screening, statistical review, bibliographical checks and above all, ethical compliance. The responsibility of quality assurance remains the biggest challenge. It is strongly felt that the institutions aspiring to publish their research journals must invest on developing a strong research department that can generate the substantive number of quality projects. Playing on a humble pitch, the time to come shall testify whether the journal persists or perishes.

Recently this institution has published a Journal of Medical Students which is online and has received significant encouragement from its readers. It can be considered to have served as inducement for publication of the present journal.

The author is extremely indebted to the managing editor who has remained his associate in two other journals and the editorial team to mature this peer reviewed open access journal.

Last but not the least, the inspirational support of Chairman RMI remained central to the commissioning of this first issue of the journal.

REFERENCES


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The author is presently Chief Editor of the Journal of Medical Students and the Journal of Rehman Medical Institute. He has remained the Chief Editor of the Medline indexed Journal of Ayub Medical College (J Ayub Med Coll Abbottabad) and the KUST Medical Journal (presently Khyber Medical University Journal, KMUJ).

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