

Editorial

Journal of Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine: A New Journey with High Hopes

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“Only trickle of ways exist around to do an appropriate study amongst around one thousand wrongful-nesses”. A widely known and popular aphorism. The research publications in medical journals are rapidly increasing in volume, where average time of appearance of articles remains to be 26 seconds. It is impossible for physicians and academicians to read such a large number of articles published in biomedical journals. The research oriented, academicians, and physicians must therefore select the articles published in reputable science journals with a philosophic approach “distinct chaff and wheat” in present era of “information tsunami”. One of these strategies is to resort to evidence-based research articles published in notable biomedical journals, indexed in leading indexing institutes such as Institute of Scientific Information (ISI) Web of Science and Pub Med.

Certainly, significance of education has been enhanced through research in science and social subjects along economic progress, decision making, and planning to achieve sustainable development goals of long-standing¹. Contribution of science and technology in innovative research has great contribution in improving the living standards and life Excellency. Academic and scientific achievements are brought forwarded through scientific research publications where journals in science have noteworthy impact in terms of exchange of knowledge at both international and national levels^{2,3}.

Pakistan has a population of 220 million individuals consisting 216 universities approved by Higher Education Commission (HEC) awarding degrees in many disciplines of which thirty universities solely belong to medical cadres. There are around 370 HEC indexed journals in different disciplines of social and life sciences in Pakistan⁴. A list of impact factor (IF) journals for the year 2019 was released by indexing institute of USA, Philadelphia, Institute of Scientific Information (ISI), Thomson Reuters and Web of Science in June 2020⁵. There were more than 13000 social and life sciences journals indexed through ISI web of science globally with a range of IF from 0.001 to 292.27 and a top position was achieved by The Cancer Journal for Clinicians USA⁵. Other topmost ranking journals in medical disciplines include Science USA (IF=41.84),

Nature (IF=42.77), Lancet USA (IF=60.30), and New England Journal of Medicine (IF=74.69). These journals maintained their Global top rankings through quality scientific writing and posed their role in development of global policies in this era of IF race⁵.

In Pakistan only 12 academic journals succeeded to get position of indexing in ISI- web of Science in global medical journals. The impact factor of these Pakistani journals is rotating from 0.3 to 1.12, and majority of journals are in fourth quartile ranking [Figure 1]. It indicates that, the global science community is not appropriately reading and citing the articles published in these journals⁵. Journal of College of Physicians and Surgeons (IF= 0.42), Pakistan Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences (IF=0.56), Journal of Pakistan Medical Association (IF=0.57) and Pakistan Journal of Medical Science (IF=0.75) are few journals of Pakistan in medical sciences to maintain their positions⁵. A platform has already been established by these journals in the field of medical sciences and publish quality research, though the sky is open requiring to fill the gap⁶. A quality research need to be published to mesmerize the community in the international science further to enhance visibility at global level which can upsurge the IF ultimately and quarter ranking of journals will help to compete at international level⁶.

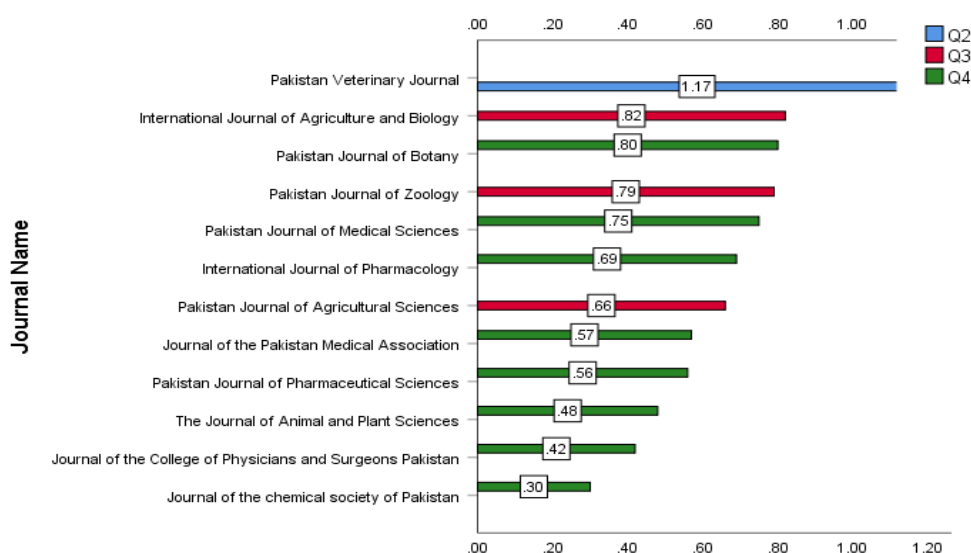


Figure 1: Pakistani Journals with Impact Factor and quartile ranking in ISI Web of Science⁶.

Although majority of the science journals are trying to publish evidence base research articles, the medical world is still facing acute shortage of conducting unbiased research. Most of the research

projects are supported in one way or another by people and organizations with vested interests. Need based research is hardly undertaken and is mostly limited to the career enhancement. Therefore, the retraction rate of science articles has been greatly increased⁶.

The irony is that even if a good research project gets completed, it is not converted into quality scientific writing. This is due to the fact that all over the world, the science of medical journalism is yet to hold its place especially in the developing world and resultantly, countries like Pakistan with a population of above two hundred and twenty million has 380 academic journals with only twelve having impact factor of which only five are medical journals. In UK, on the other hand, with a population of around 68 million, there are more than 200 impact factor medical journals indexed in ISI Web of Science. We need to enhance the institutional capacity on two counts, i.e. quality in research and that in medical writings. The various health institutions must invest in R&D and should keep a separate budgetary head for the purpose. This will encourage unbiased standardized research and hopefully the same can then be translated into good research papers with an increase in the quality publications.

In the history of Pakistan, the University of Health Sciences, Lahore started a postgraduate degree program in medical journalism and scientific writing and the first batch has graduated in year 2020. The main objective of this program is to provide current knowledge and training skills to physicians in ethics based, quality scientific writing.

Currently, COVID-19 pandemic has placed some concerns on the world of medical research and medical journalism. Unfortunately, the researchers and medical journalists perceived this disaster as an opportunity for themselves and their publications. The sudden surge in research projects and research publications was experienced while compromising the quality. Even the most renowned medical journals like Lancet, New England Journal of Medicine retracted the research articles and were rightly criticized for being biased in publishing poor science under the pressure of powerful organizations⁷.

Medical professionals must be good learners all over their careers through self-directed learning in independent and active means. These goals could only be achieved by a devotion of around one hour time a day to medical literature regularly. Due to great diversity of literature on the other hand precludes medical professionals from reading all of the mess and requires potential strategies of scanning, choosing and studying medical literature are essential. How then can one select a journal? Even many experienced Physicians lack the skills. Such skills are rarely imparted

officially throughout trainings during medical academics and trainings. That is the reason behind bringing out the Journal of Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine (JPSIM). A strong foundation for any new journal is of paramount importance and I am glad that JPSIM, our flagship journal of Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine has the right mix of the team to deliver to the medical world, a journal which shall In Sha Allah set enviable standards for others. I am confident that our highly competent and professional team shall leave no stone unturned to lay a solid foundation for the journal.

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How to cite this:

Akram J. Journal of Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine: A New Journey with High Hopes. J Pak Soc Intern Med. 2020;1(1):

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