ROLE OF JOURNALS IN MEDICAL SCIENCES

Dr. Sofia Shehzad

Medical science has progressed leaps and bounds over the past century or so. New concepts and understandings have developed overtime broadening the scope of scientific knowledge in terms of diagnosis and management of various diseases. Surgical procedures have become highly technical with surgeons world over, keen to try and adapt to the changing trends and requirements from time to time.

The medical field is one which has always relied on sharing of knowledge amongst the stake holders especially the doctors and paramedical staff in an effort to learn from each other's experience. The need for this co-operation and co-ordination in this day and age is beyond the iota of any doubt.

One way for a constructive exchange of ideas and knowledge amongst the medical personnel is to rely on details of one's experiences and views to be published in peer review journals accessible to others for enhancing the horizon of their professional practice. The importance and impact of Medical journals was best described by a Chicago Physician Salisbury JH in 1906 as follows; "Medical school is attended, as a rule, but once in a lifetime; the meetings of the medical society are usually infrequent, but the medical journal, like the newspaper, is an ever-present friend whose influence and advice are potent for good or evil.¹"

To derive maximum benefit from published work it is important to ensure global review of research work and have a constant exchange of ideas² by way of constructive criticism.

To ensure the credibility of their published journals, most of the editorial boards strive to attain high standards of published material. Research work in the form of original articles are favored by most medical journals supplemented by book reviews, reviews of clinical practice, case reports, readers' letters, and their own editorials.³ Their significance is described as under;

1. Original articles give information about objectives, methods, results, discussion and conclusions of a new research.
2. Reviews are an overview of one particular topic of clinical interest. Also included under this umbrella are systematic reviews and meta-analysis.
3. Reports of clinical cases of special interest or a short series of case reports are now sparingly published in journals.
4. Readers letters and the editors own views on varied subjects adds to the amplitude of a journal.

In spite of their importance in disseminating key health information, medical journals have often have had a tenuous existence with a constantly changing spectrum and many journals struggling to define their role.

A lot depends on the quality of printed material and readiness of the reading physician to accept the findings printed. Various modalities are used to rate journals for the benefit of their readers.

Peer reviewed journals are now accepted as a norm for any publication to be deemed credible. With growing awareness other portals such as impact factor devised by 'Eugene Garfield' are now frequently quoted to define the quality of a journal. Impact factor is a measure of average number of citations to recent published articles in an academic journal. It is calculated by taking into account the number of times that all items published in a journal over the period of 2 consecutive years are cited by indexed publications in the following e.g. year and dividing it by the total number of citable items published by that journal over the period of the 2 years in question. However it will be inappropriate to use it as a mean of comparison between different journals because it cannot be consistently reproduced in an independent audit⁴, the speed of publication varies amongst disciplines and the nature of published articles (e.g. review articles which are cited more often).

Way back in 1884, President Leartus Connor of America gave his vision for the medical journal as one which ought to be a medical school, a residency program, a clinical preceptor, a set of textbooks, and a medical society unto itself. He concluded, "it is the great unifier of the past and present, the diffuser of all new facts, new thoughts, all new and better appliances for the study of the human body and for the relief of its derangements⁵" Almost a century and three decades later his words have been imbibed in history as a guiding principle to define the role of journals in medical science.

REFERENCES

1. -Salisbury JH. *The subordination of medical journals to proprietary interests.* JAMA 1906;46:1337-1338
2. - [Joseph Ana](#), *The role of a general medical journal* BMJ, 2004; 328(7439): 591.
3. Scott H. Podolsky., Jeremy A. Greene, David S. Jones *The Evolving Roles of the Medical Journal* N Engl J Med 2012; 366:1457-1461
4. Rossner, M., Van Epps, H., Hill, E. . ["Show me the data"](#). *Journal of Cell Biology* 179 (6) 2007: 1091–2
5. Connor L. *The American medical journal of the future as indicated by the history of American journals in the past.* JAMA 1884;2:650-657

LICENSE: JGMDS publishes its articles under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Share-Alike license (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0).
COPYRIGHTS: Authors retain the rights without any restrictions to freely download, print, share and disseminate the article for any lawful purpose. It includes scholarly networks such as Research Gate, Google Scholar, LinkedIn, Academia.edu, Twitter, and other academic or professional networking sites.