

CONTINUOUS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE QUALITY AND CONTENTS

Ever since the start of Online Edition of Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences in 2001 (in addition to the printed format) there has been a gradual increase in the number of manuscripts received for publication. During the Year 2002, a total of seventy-five new manuscripts were received. A comparison of the published manuscripts during the last three-year (Table-I) shows that there has been a substantial increase in the number of original articles and letters received for publication.¹ Table-II gives further details about the cities from where these manuscripts were received during the Year 2002.

Most of the medical and dental journals published from Pakistan usually do not carry letters simply because the readers are not much interested to comment on the published material. Although at times, they can add some very useful information based on their own personal experience, which could be of immense benefit not only to the authors but also to the readers at large. During the various workshops organized by Pakistan Medical Journalists Association, the speakers have time and again invited the participants to write letters to the editors which could also be the start of their academic journey in the form of medical writing. Hence it is commendable that during the Year 2002 we received fifteen letters as compared to just three in Year 2000 and four during the Year 2001.

As discussed during the Editorial Board meetings of Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences,² in order to add variety to the contents of the

Journal, a number of new features like Current Issues, Leading Articles, Special Communications, Conference Proceedings and a Section on Family Practice have been added so that the journal offers something to every healthcare professional. A student's section has

Table - I: Details of manuscripts published during 2000, 2001 & 2002

	2000	2001	2002
Editorial	07	06	09
Current Issues	-	-	01
Leading Articles	01	05	-
Original Articles	26	25	33
Review Article	05	02	05
Case Report	06	06	04
Drug Trials	-	02	-
Emerging Issues	-	01	-
Special Communication	-	-	02
Short Communication	05	02	04
Symposium/Conference Proceedings / CME	-	01	02
Correspondence (Letters)	03	04	15
Sounding Board for Debate	-	01	-
Consensus Report (PAF)	-	-	01
Travel Notes	-	01	-
Family Practice	-	01	-
Students Section	-	01	-
Subject & Author Index	-	01	01
TOTAL	53	59	77

Correspondence:

Shaukat Ali Jawaid
E-mail: shaukat@pulsepakistan.com

Table-II: Geographical distribution of manuscripts published during 2000, 2001 & 2002

	2000	2001	2002
PUNJAB			
Lahore	14	14	22
Rawalpindi-Islamabad	06	05	06
Multan	-	01	01
Faisalabad	-	01	02
Bahawalpur	01	01	-
Dera Ghazi Khan	-	02	-
TOTAL	21	24	31
SINDH			
Karachi	22	20	27
Hyderabad	-	01	01
Larkana	01	-	-
Mirpurkhas	-	01	-
TOTAL	23	22	28
NWFP			
Peshawar	02	03	01
Abbottabad	-	-	03
TOTAL	02	03	04
BALUCHISTAN			
Quetta	02	-	-
TOTAL	02	-	-

also been added and hopefully we will get some manuscripts in this section as well.

As usual, the majority of the manuscripts being received by Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences from within the country, are from Karachi and Lahore and the same was the case during the Year 2000 as well as 2001. This also shows that most of the academic activities are confined to these two major cities. A casual glance at other medical journals published from Pakistan also shows that majority of the manuscripts are from the major cities where most of the undergraduate and postgraduate medical institutions are located. It also highlights another problem that the healthcare professionals in the small cities some of which now do have newly established medical colleges as well, do not have adequate facilities.

Even those who wish to write, are handicapped due to various reasons the most important being the lack of guidance. Absence of proper libraries and reference material is yet another major hindrance. The mere fact that we do not receive more manuscripts from small cities in the country doesn't mean that health care professional in these cities are not interested in academics or they do not write at all. In fact a few of them who do write prefer to get their manuscripts published in those Journals, which do not practice a peer review. Since the PM&DC has recognized a large number of medical and dental journals³ and publication in all of them carry equal credit, these authors are reluctant to submit their manuscripts to Journals like Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences which practice a strict peer review system. Since they do not have the facilities either, they try to avoid being asked to rewrite the manuscript to improve its quality. Some of the manuscripts that we did receive from the small cities in the past were rejected by the reviewers as they failed to meet even the minimum standards set by our editorial board for acceptance of the manuscript. Some of these authors were also provided necessary guidelines to rewrite their manuscripts, but they did not respond. At times we do accept the manuscript, especially from smaller cities and towns which lack the desired standards. This is simply to encourage these authors, even though it involves lot of rewriting and editing on the part of reviewers and referees, in an effort to improve the quality of these papers as much as possible. These are certainly considered as exceptional and special cases of manuscript acceptance.

To help, guide and assist the authors from the small cities it is essential that all the District Headquarter Hospitals in the country should have good reference libraries. They should also have facilities of Internet so that search for reference material is not a problem. In addition seminars and workshops on medical writing, research methodology should be organized at the DHQ hospitals regularly. Professional speciality organizations as well as

Pakistan Medical Journalists' Association (PMJA) can be approached by the DHQ hospitals in this regard. So far the DHQ hospitals have concentrated on service provision only and it is high time that an academic environment is also created at these healthcare facilities. Pharmaceutical industry can also extend its valuable assistance for such academic activities at the DHQ hospitals.

Sincere devoted and dedicated efforts of our Reviewers, Referees who take lot o pains to edit, advise and suggest changes in the manuscripts submitted to them for evaluation has gone a long way in improving the contents and quality of the journal.⁴ Their sincere advise is also appreciated by the authors since it helps them in their future writings. As shown in Table-III during the Year 2002, total number of manuscripts (original, review articles, short communications etc.) received were seventy-

Table III: Details of new manuscripts received during the year 2002

	No.	%
Accepted (Primary/after Revision)	52	69.33
Rejected	09	12.00
Under Process	14	18.67
Total No. of new manuscripts received	75	100.00

five. Out of this fifty-two manuscripts were accepted for publication. This also includes twenty manuscripts, which were accepted after revision. Nine of these manuscripts were finally rejected while fourteen are still under process. Table-IV shows that the manuscripts received cover a wide range of disciplines of medicine while Table-V gives details regarding their acceptance status during the Year 2002. While primary acceptance accounted for thirty-two manuscripts, twenty were accepted after first or second revision based on the suggestions of the reviewers/referees.

The number of manuscripts received from overseas for publication in Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences has considerably

Table - IV: Specialty wise manuscripts

Anatomy	01
Anesthesia	01
Behavior Sciences (Psychiatry / Psychology)	10
Cardiology	05
Community Medicine	02
Dermatology	03
Diabetes Mellitus	01
Family Medicine	03
Gastroenterology	02
General Medicine	03
General Surgery	01
Hematology	03
Microbiology	01
Neurology	02
Obstetric & Gynaecology	02
Pathology	01
Pediatric Medicine	01
Pediatric Surgery	01
Pulmonary Medicine	01
Radiology / Imaging	04
Toxicology	01
GENERAL	
Health Care Quality Management	01
Peer Review	01
Editorial	09
Correspondence (Letters)	15
Consensus Report (PAF)	01
Subject & Author Index	01
TOTAL	77

Table - V: Acceptance status of the manuscript - 2002

	Primary acceptance	Accepted after revision
Editorial	08	01
Original Articles	17	16
Case Report	03	01
Short Communication	03	01
Special Communication	01	01

Table - VI: Number of manuscripts published from overseas during 2000, 2001 & 2002

	2000	2001	2002
Bangladesh	02	02	04
Canada	-	-	01
Jordan	-	-	03
Malaysia	-	01	01
Nepal	-	01	-
Oman	01	01	-
Philippines	-	01	-
Saudi Arabia	-	01	02
UK	01	-	01
USA	01	03	02
TOTAL	05	10	14

increased ever since the start of Online edition because it has increased the readership manifold. (Table-VI) During the Year 2000 the total number of manuscripts from overseas were five, which increased to ten in the Year 2001 but during the Year 2002 as many as fourteen manuscripts were received from overseas. This trend is continuing as in the current Year 2003, during the first two months we have received manuscripts from countries like South

Africa and Iran as well for the first time. We hope that the induction of overseas members in the Editorial Board will also be helpful not only in improving the contents and quality of the journal but also in attracting more and more manuscripts from overseas so that we are able to achieve our objective to make the Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences as one of the most widely read and referred medical periodical from this part of the world.

REFERENCES

1. Jawaaid S.A. Self Audit for the Year 2000 and 2001. Pak J Med Sci 2002; 18(1) 1-3.
2. Jawaaid SA. In Search of Excellence Pak J Med Sci 2002; 18(4) 265-267.
3. Medical and Dental Journals recognized by Pakistan Medical and Dental Council. Notification dated September 3rd, 2002. Website: www.pmdc.org.pk
4. Proceedings of Workshop on Peer Review System held at Karachi and Lahore. Pak J Med Sci 2002; 18(4) 328-333.

SHAUKAT ALI JAWAID
 Publisher/Managing Editor

(February 25, 2003)