

Recognition of Medical Journals and Quality of Published Articles

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In Pakistan the medical journals get recognized on official basis if they fulfill criteria laid down by Pakistan Medical & Dental Council (PMDC). It is important to note that PMDC recognition is not mandatory for any journal and they can approach internationally recognized indexing bodies. Thus journals are under no obligation to follow the rules of PMDC. Different indexing bodies have their own criteria thus anomaly may exist. It is apparent in present day scenario, as journal not indexed with Pubmed/Medline acquired impact factor from Thomson Reuters while others indexed with same indexing body, are without impact factor.

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan attaches promotions to higher posts upon number of publications in impact factor journals in addition to other requirements. One astonishing fact that is not taken into consideration is the quality of manuscript published in a journal, be it indexed with international or national indexing systems or published in journals having impact factor or not. This has lead to conflict as journals with international recognition may publish poor quality articles with lowest rank on evidence based ladder, poor methodology without statistical support and vague, irrelevant discussion. Such articles hardly add to knowledge of the readers while national journals may publish a high quality randomized controlled trials.

It is time that we should move forward by adding quality assessment of articles published in a journal through a properly designed Performa. There are studies on the subject of quality of articles published in journals and a lead can be taken from them to formulate a structured document covering various aspects of published articles.¹⁻³ A committee of medical professionals well versed with the art and science of research, and medical writing and editing, must be

constituted, the mandate of which should be the evaluation of what is published in a journal.

A distinction must be made as to the category of journal. The general journals usually receive large number of articles from all disciplines while specialty journals have limited input. In some fields research can not be expected to follow the general laid down rules, e.g. field of surgical and allied disciplines, where strict ethical standards put a bar on experiencing new techniques on human subjects. The checklist thus must be made taking into consideration many diverse aspects of evaluation of an article. The journals assessed may be provided with the ranking according to this new approach.

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