

Inception of Journal of Pakistan Medical Students (JPMS): From a Dream to Reality

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The current era of science and technology is witnessing a logarithmic growth in scientific knowledge. This exponential increase in information is directly attributable to the untiring efforts of researchers across the globe. With addition of 6-7% of scientific information annually, the available knowledge doubles every decade. Hence, as expected, the number of scientific journals continues to increase in order to inculcate such tremendous amount of novel data. This increase can be appreciated from the fact that the total number of journals climbed from approximately 1000 at the beginning of 20th century to over 20,000 in 1982 [1].

Medicine is an imperative part of scientific field and the contributions of medical researchers for the betterment of humanity cannot be overstated. Indeed, we're now living in a time of "evidence-based medicine" where the best possible therapy for a patient is chosen based on the published literature. Recent years have witnessed another interesting trend; increased involvement of undergraduate medical students in scientific research which ranges from a simple survey to complex lab-based studies.

South Asia is an important part of the planet inhabited by one-fifth of the world's population. Unfortunately, due to a myriad of factors, the contribution of its researchers to the field of science has been comparatively small. A study in 2005 reported that the South Asian researchers contributed to a meager 1.2% of the total number of papers [2]. Furthermore, the lack of research infrastructure in South Asia, and particularly in Pakistan, is worrisome. United States has 4526 researchers per million citizens, [3] while Indo-Pak has 208 researchers per million citizens [4, 5]. In other words, the United States has a 20-fold advantage over the South Asian countries in the number of researchers per million. This large discrepancy has not gone unnoticed and efforts are underway to close this gap as much as possible. As a result, the present decade is witnessing an increasing number of papers been written by South Asian authors.

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC) has also reported an increased number of research papers from the Pakistani universities.

In concert with an increased interest in medical research at postgraduate level, there is also an increased interest at undergraduate level. However, provision of a platform for publishing research studies at the level of undergraduate medical students, has been long awaited. Three attempts were made in the past to launch a medical students' journal in Pakistan. Unfortunately, all were abandoned before the release of first edition. To fill this gap, few journals publish limited amount of manuscripts from medical students in a separate section of their journals.

The current scope of research in Pakistan has not been very overwhelming. Nourishment of the trend in research by undergraduate medical students is imperative as it has been directly linked to the trend of increased research in postgraduate trainees [6, 7]. A study conducted in India reported that two-thirds of the postgraduate students read a scientific article not more than once in six months [2]. Unavailability and inaccessibility of the free online articles is a huge hindrance in promoting interest in research literature. Only a handful of universities offer free access to paid journals in developing countries in general and Pakistan in particular.

To overcome the above mentioned challenges, final year students of Dow Medical College, Karachi, Pakistan, decided to start the Journal of Pakistan Medical Students (JPMS). Founding editors realized that JPMS should be freely accessible to everyone. To further expand the horizon of JPMS, a multidisciplinary approach was chosen with wide spectrum of publications. Conference Proceedings and Paper Presentations in the form of abstracts will also be entertained in the form of a supplement. The scope of JPMS includes articles from all the subspecialties of Internal Medicine, General Surgery and allied fields, ENT, Ophthalmology, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics, Psychiatrics, Psychology, Radiology, Genetics, Biochemistry, Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, Forensic Sciences, Community Medicine, Epidemiology, Research Methodology, Medical Ethics and other specialties.

While JPMS faced a myriad of challenges for its

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launch, it was widely encouraged after its inception. Inculcation of esteemed preceptors and contributions from eight countries provided sustainability to the work and added faith in its success. We established a network of ambassadors (regional chairpersons) in colleges and universities, both nationally and internationally. Today we have more than 50 ambassadors representing our dream. Our ambassadors have been working to promote not only JPMS but also to increase awareness of research among the students at their respective institutes. Division of the JPMS family into Editorial, Public Relations, Faculty Advisors, Professionals and Regional Chairpersons enormously eased our work. The editorial board was divided into Senior Editors (faculty members), Editors (students) and Associate Editors (students). The term students include interns, MPhil/PhD students and medical/dental students.

To mentor them and ensure the quality of publication, each article goes through two senior editors who are well-versed and renowned in their field of work. Our peer reviewers are also students who work closely with the student editors. Each article goes through two peer reviewers for an unbiased critical analysis.

JPMS pledges not to show flexibility in terms of the quality of the articles published. Our long term vision is to provide a solid forum for researchers to present their work. Our name "Pakistan Medical Students" strictly implies that JPMS was started by medical students. The reason why the founding editors decided to publish manuscripts from across the globe was to enhance the quality and to bring closer student researchers from all over the world. Bringing researchers closer will foster networking, collaboration, and learning from each others' experiences. JPMS also provides a platform for the faculty to share their research and plans to accept their contributions for the educational corner where they can mentor our student readers. We are thankful to each and every single person who supported our dream and to those who joined our team and worked with us to bring change. The whole JPMS team is working on a voluntary basis and we value every second of every volunteer spent for this cause.

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