

Let's build our own International Journal

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Publishing research in well-known scientific journals provides better visibility, wider dissemination and hence greater impact of the results, and professional rewards including promotion. Scientists throughout the world are under continuous pressure to publish in well-known international journals [1]. Due to changing competitive environment in Pakistan in recent years, publishing research in journals of international repute has attained a significant influence on the academic growth of faculty and scientists. Journals are commonly ranked on the basis of their impact factors (IF), with a higher IF being associated with more prestigious journals. The investigators almost always think of submitting their work in journals with high IF. IF of the journal has become an instrument for the assessment of quality of the journals monitored periodically by Thomson Scientific (formerly International Scientific Institute-ISI), Philadelphia, USA. Although, there are several criticisms and limitations of IF of journal [2-4], it is still a widely used indicator for assessing the impact and quality of a journal [5]. Moreover, publication of research in a journal with high IF carries significant weight in the hiring, funding, and promotion of an investigator [1]. Scientists from developing countries aspire to submit their research to international journals with high IF despite the general perception that it is difficult to get published in those journals [6]. A recently conducted survey found that the corresponding authors from developing countries believe that reviewers and editors are biased against them [7]. Various studies have also reported that the authors from developing countries are grossly underrepresented in top biomedical journals [8, 9].

While one can argue that under these circumstances, Pakistani researchers should support and strengthen our own journals [10], there are very few Pakistani biomedical journals that are indexed with international databases (such as Medline) and even fewer have been given an IF. Nevertheless, there are several advantages of publishing in local journals. The foremost is a better understanding of research background, resources, and cultural issues that affect the type

of research by the editorial board and reviewers. Moreover, local publication of research is likely to have greater impact at the local level where it is most relevant and more likely to be cited by local investigators. In fact, a recent study has shown that papers published even in the top international journals by authors from developing countries do not attract citations from other papers [11]. Publishing in local journals may also mitigate the bias, real or perceived, among reviewers and editors of the international journals.

All these factors compel scientific community of Pakistan to build and strengthen its own scientific journals of international repute with high IF. In addition to submission of manuscripts to local journals, conscious efforts should be made to cite contextual and relevant papers published in Pakistani journals. On one hand such a practice will result in citation of the most relevant research from the 'research milieu' stand point, while on the other hand, it may help in improving the IF of local journals. The IF of a journal is heavily dependent on the number of times that a paper from that journal has been cited by other papers [12]. Journals can also invite high-quality review articles from well-known local investigators as review articles are known to be cited more frequently. Proactive efforts in this direction from both the management of the journal as well as from the investigators will contribute to raise the IF of our journals. A higher IF will have a positive feedback effect since reputation of the journals will attract a larger number of high-quality submissions from the country as well as from abroad. All reputable international journals have taken decades to reach where they stand now and it will take decades to build a local journal into a reputable international journal. A constant focus on improving the quality and standard of local journals will slowly but surely result in journals of international repute and while the process is slow and requires persistence and hard work, we need to start anyway, so let's start now!

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