

JPPS RECOGNISED BY PAKISTAN MEDICAL AND DENTAL COUNCIL BUT THE CHALLENGE REMAINS

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PPS is now included in the list of recognised journals by Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) and Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan¹. These are highly important achievements for the scientific psychiatry in Pakistan. Achieving these milestones was not easy. The biggest challenge was to maintain the continuous publication of the journal for almost six years. Like any other journal which is not recognised by the regulatory bodies like PMDC, we were caught in a catch twenty-two situation. Because the journal is not recognised, the teaching staff in any institution would be very reluctant to submit article to such a journal. As you are not able to get the good quality articles, the PMDC is not likely to recognise you. Soon after taking over the journal, we started the process required for recognition of the journal by the PMDC. We were aware of the fact that it will not be possible to sustain the journal without getting this recognition. Unfortunately, the recognition process by PMDC was very long. Neither PMDC nor HEC raised questions about the quality of the journal or its content. The process of recognition is quite slow and committees concerned with the recognition had long delays between the meetings. As a result, we had to publish five volumes before achieving this recognition by the PMDC.

Maintaining regular publication of the journal was an uphill task during this period. In fact, at one point we thought that it would not be possible to bring out more than two volumes without recognition by the PMDC, as the faculty in academic institutions in Pakistan was not keen to submit the research work to a journal that is not recognised by PMDC. This was understandable to some extent as the promotion to higher academic posts in Pakistan depends upon the number of papers published in a PMDC recognised journal. This challenge however opened new opportunities for the journal. We introduced the journal at various international forums. The website of the journal proved a great boost. The high quality of presentation, relevance and scientific vigour of the contents soon attracted the attention of academia internationally. After publishing couple of issues, we started having articles from New Zealand, Iran, India, UK and

many other countries. This sustained flow of articles helped us to maintain high quality publications during a time when there were very few submissions from Pakistan. In fact, we could argue that JPPS had most submissions from other countries compared to any other journal in Pakistan which was in its nascence and had yet to be recognised by PMDC. JPPS has not only been able to attract quality original articles which are the backbone of any scientific journal but also high quality reviews, special articles and guest editorials from authorities in their field. The submission by these internationally renowned authorities in itself speaks volume about the quality of the journal which was maintained during this period.

It would be worthwhile to trace the history of the journal at this moment. The history of the journal reflects the scientific and academic developments in psychiatry in Pakistan. Very few people would know that Peshawar is the birthplace of first scientific journal in Psychiatry in Pakistan. The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry first started in early nineties. This journal was published by Dr. Unees ur Rahman as editor along with Dr. Afzal Javed. The editors of the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry can rightly be regarded as pioneers of scientific publishing in psychiatry in Pakistan and the journal could be considered as forerunner of the JPPS. This unfortunately has not been acknowledged very widely. The journal, however, could not maintain the continuity and disappeared after few issues. Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society (JPPS) was first published in 2002. However, this proved to be first and only issue and JPPS could not be continued. In 2005 the JPPS was revived and the editorial base returned to Peshawar. The history of scientific journals in Psychiatry in Pakistan was not very encouraging and served to highlight the difficulties in maintaining the continuous publication of a scientific journal but the editorial team of the JPPS decided to take up this challenge. All the members of editorial team worked hard for this. Associate Editor, Dr. Muhammad Irfan needs special mention as he worked at times in finalizing the last details of the journal in press while bombs were exploding almost daily in Peshawar.

However, the real challenge lies ahead after achieving the recognition. The scientific publications arena is ever expanding. There are more publications and tougher regulations by universities and regulatory bodies which recognise the scientific journal demand

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higher standards. The recognition criteria by HEC are a good example of this². At international level, the journals are facing strict criteria for recognition. The universities increasingly demand the impact factor of the journal in which an article is published. This is impossible to achieve if the journal is not indexed in Medline and other similar databases. I feel that in the next five years we should aim to achieve the following.

1. To achieve the indexation in MEDLINE and then strive to achieve for the Impact Factor.
2. To increase the frequency of the publications to at least quarterly.

To achieve these objectives it is essential that there is a permanent editorial base for the journal. This must have full time secretarial staff and necessary facilities for office work. The editorial input could be provided by the professional psychiatrists working in different cities but there must be adequate staff which performs the functions related to production, publication and dissemination. This is the only way to sustain the high quality publication over a long term.

One of the biggest challenge is making the journal economically viable. At present the journal is almost entirely dependent upon the advertisement revenue from the pharmaceuticals. I must clarify that these advertisements are accepted following a strict criteria to maintain the editorial independence. These are just enough for publishing the journal from one issue to the next. Considering that the cost of production, printing and mailing have increased substantially, it would not be possible to sustain the journal in long term. I suggested to the executive committee of the PPS some time back that the registration fee of every scientific confer-

ence held under the auspices of the PPS should have an additional money which is meant for funding the JPPS. For example, Rs.1000 could be added to the registration fee of annual national and biennial international psychiatric conference of PPS. This would mean that every registered participant for a national or international conference in Pakistan would contribute to the journal as a part of registration fees. The registered participants will receive the issues of the journal published during that year. As the numbers of participants in these conferences is gradually increasing, this could become a permanent source of funding for the journal. This would mean that the journal would not be entirely dependent on the advertisement revenue. I can not overemphasize the fact the JPPS has become a source of recognition for the PPS at international level. Recognising the value of the journal, it is now high time that the members of PPS should consider this suggestion seriously. The executive committee of the PPS must ensure that the JPPS has permanent source of revenue which should help the editorial board only to focus on the scientific and academic content of the journal.

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