Taking stock and looking ahead

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It has been over eighteen months since this team took over the editorial functions of the Journal of Postgraduate Medicine. It is time we took stock of the situation and assessed where we stand! The journal has been receiving contributions from scientists all over the world. During the calendar year 2003 the editors received 438 manuscripts from authors drawn from over 30 countries, 134 (32%) were accepted, 284 were rejected and 20 continue to be in the review process. On an average, the first response was conveyed to the author in 24 days. The mean turn around time (time from first submission to acceptance) was 62 days and the average time between acceptance and publication of a manuscript was 71 days. These parameters mirror the journal’s policy and commitment not only to choose articles for publication only after a thorough and careful peer review, but also to do so with minimal time lag so that the ideas and results are widely disseminated to the scientific community at the earliest. It has been possible to achieve this scale of efficiency largely due to the commitment and sagacity of our reviewers. On behalf of the editorial team, I wish to express my gratitude to each one of the 1432 referees drawn from various countries spread across the globe.

The time, money and efforts invested in improving the journal over the years have paid rich dividends. Last year, the journal continued to attract the attention of bibliographic indexing agencies. In 2003, the journal has been listed with five more agencies and databases bringing the number of organisations that include JPGM in their databases to 30. The new additions this year include PsycINFO (by American Psychological Association), Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature and CINAHL Database, MANTIS, POPLINE, Thomson Gale’s databases (Health and Wellness Research Center, Health Reference Center Academic, InfoTrac One File, Expanded Academic ASAP) and databases of EBSCO Publishing. It is also heartening to note that the articles published in journal are being cited more often. In the year 2000, only two out of 60 articles published in the previous two years were cited. For the year 2003, the number has increased to 41 citations for 155 published articles. It is hoped that the journal will continue to widen its impact in future!

Several new initiatives were undertaken last year. Publication of symposia and series on unusually discussed but important aspects such as open access and clinical photography were prominent amongst them. In addition, the idea of providing expert comments on published papers was well received by readers. One of the most gratifying initiatives was improvement in the journal’s website and manuscript tracking system. The journal’s website has undergone extensive ‘renovation’ with a view to make it more useful to the readers and also to ensure better user interface. The website is now structured as per OpenURL (enabling easier linking), DC Metadata (fascilitating easier searching and indexing), W3C (allowing uniform browser experience) and other international standards. By the end of 2002, full text articles published in the journal from 1990 onwards were made available on the website. Now, a visitor can view and download articles published in the journal as early as 1980. The abstracts and full texts of the cited references have been directly linked and these can be accessed at the click of the mouse. The facilities for submission of and review of manuscripts and providing email notification regarding the release of new issues have been improved upon. The website is now equipped to provide statistical data such as number of users online, number of visitors since a predetermined date and data regarding article downloads. No wonder that the website is being “hit” by over 2500 unique visitors every day. At the time of going to press, the articles of the immediate past issue were read over 12000 times!

The year also witnessed efforts taken towards improving the editorial process. Considering the fact that most of the manuscripts are submitted by authors whose native language is not English, the journal has appointed language editors to help them in improving the language used in manuscript. In addition, the journal now has a statistical editor who ensures that relevant and precise statistical data are incorporated in research papers published in the journal.

What about plans for the next year? With the publication of this issue, the Journal of Postgraduate Medicine has entered the 50th year of its existence. To commemorate this occasion, the journal wishes to make a contribution to the field of medical writing. Come September 2004, the journal would host a conference, the ‘JPGM GoldCon’, on the art and science of medical writing and publishing. This international conference, which would be organised in Mumbai would provide an opportunity to medical scientists, authors and editors to interact with experts in their field. The list of topics that would be discussed, the names of faculty and other details of the conference are printed elsewhere in this issue.
This year, the editorial board has also decided to work for the fulfilment of its long cherished ambition of having the journal archived with PubMed Central. If achieved, this would be a tribute to the efforts of contributors and reviewers in maintaining the quality of the journal. In the year 2004, the reader will have a “new-look” journal with an innovative cover and unique page designs in his hands. To increase editorial accountability, we would also be printing the date of submission and date of acceptance of each published article. From now on, we would be printing the journal on an acid-free paper making your journal copy more resistant to wear and tear. But the journal itself is not resistant to change, as it believes that change is the only constant phenomenon in this ever-changing world. More specifically, the editorial board is toying with the idea of printing the reviewer’s name with the published manuscript. It is the considered opinion of some that this would be one way of acknowledging the contribution of and expressing the gratitude to the reviewers, who expend their most valuable resource, viz. time at gratis just to ensure that the quality of scientific communication is enhanced.

The journal continues to be committed to the policy of open access, as the Staff society of Seth GS Medical College and KEM Hospital and the editorial board firmly believe that scientific data should be available to one and all. The ultimate aim of scientific research, more so of medical research, is betterment of mankind and hence accessibility to such material should not be limited or restricted by race, caste, creed, geographic location or economic considerations. Hence the journal continues to offer free access to its treasures via Internet, directly through its website and also through other sources such as Bioline International, Canada and interoperable e-print archive servers.

I hope that the journal has met your expectations, be it as a contributor, subscriber or reader and that this report has provided you a sense of where we are and where we wish to proceed. The board would be happy to receive your suggestions, questions and comments that would help the journal in charting its course through the forthcoming golden years!

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Announcement

Golden Jubilee: Best Paper Award

The Journal of Postgraduate Medicine is pleased to announce institution of the Best paper Award for original articles to be published in the journal during the Golden Jubilee year. Two papers amongst all the original papers published in volume number 50 [during calendar year 2004] will be selected based on various criteria such as originality, clinical relevance and implications, access and rating by reviewers. These papers will be entitled to a cash prize and a certificate of appreciation. The authors do not have to apply for the award separately; all published articles will be scrutinized for the prize. The prize will be announced in April 2005 issue.