limited and varied information for preparing a case report. They recommended a need for consensus and more consistent guidance for the authors of case report.4

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“The case report” Author’s reply

Sir,
I appreciate the communication from Dr. Bhattachary. I hereby offer some comments.

If the case report is submitted to appropriate journal, if the instructions are strictly followed and if the report has a clinical message, such case report is less likely to go into ‘oblivion’. Any such case if rejected by 2 or 3 journals is probably not worth reporting. Author may try luck in ‘Images or Quiz’. As a matter of fact the Editor of IJS in his editorial has welcomed the case reports and innovations.1

In today’s explosive scientific climate, with economic constraints and demand from scholars, the leading journals are pragmatic in focusing attention on evidence based material rather than single case reports. The case reports are written by practicing clinicians while the research or trial papers are usually written by the scholars as it forms a part of their carrier. It is inappropriate to say that surgeons in general fail to recognize the ‘uniqueness’ of the case or always misdiagnose the case. Obstacles in writing like laziness, reluctance, inertia of habit, inexperience, absence of enthusiasm to acquire art and skill in writing etc have been enumerated in my paper “How to Write a Medical Paper”.2 Writing case report proportionately consumes more energy and is rather difficult to write as it has no uniform format and it is less likely that students during in their postgraduate training can produce scholarly work without the help of seniors. Though the postgraduates should be primarily taught to write a good thesis or dissertation, many seniors use their services to collect the references and to prepare a preliminary note for their manuscript. The post graduates in turn do get some experience in searching literature and in preparing the rough draft. The PG student should consider himself lucky if he finds his name in the final list of authors.

Writing case report is not easy and there is nothing wrong in submitting “anything that is remotely interesting” for some one but interesting for others. It is the prerogative of the editors whether to accept or reject such material. Finally the evidence based papers do compete with the case reports for space in journal but they should be considered complimentary and not antagonistic because their aim is to inform.

Finally it is difficult to provide uniform guidelines for case report. In spite of instructions for uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals by International Committee of Medical Journal Editors,3 every journal specifies some guidelines depending on the objective and readership of that journal and hence this attempt to provide wider information on writing “The Case Report”.

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