

## Journal ranking and case reports

Since engaging Medknow/Wolters Kluwer as publishers of The Port Harcourt Medical Journal, the editorial board has worked hard towards increasing its circulation by improving on all aspects of the journal. The paradigm shift described in our 2016 10:1 edition has since commenced.<sup>1</sup> The editorial team had to undergo training on the use of the electronic platform provided by the publishers and apply it in the editorial process. Submissions are now managed online, and we have since done away with manual processes. Peer reviewers are now invited from all parts of the globe with the ‘touch of a button’. This has however not been without challenges.

Funding of the journal has been one of the major issues especially with the economic recession experienced in Nigeria since 2016.<sup>2</sup> The cost of publication has more than doubled while the revenue accruing to the journal has more or less remained the same. Sourcing foreign currency to pay for the publisher’s services was almost impossible in 2016 but has eased with new government policies. Articles published in the first two issues in 2016 were mainly from Port Harcourt while the last issue and the first in 2017 contained an increased number of articles from outside Port Harcourt. Most of the articles in this issue are from other parts of Nigeria. We are yet to publish a few articles received from outside Nigeria because they are still undergoing the peer-review process.

Only seven articles were processed through the current platform in 2015, of which one was accepted and the remainder were still undergoing peer review in 2016. Out of 47 articles submitted in 2016, 26 (57%) were accepted, 3 (6%) were rejected and 17 (36%) were still under review till the end of the year. Of the 34 articles received so far this year, 15 (44%) have been accepted and 19 (56%) are still under review. Delay in publication is mostly due to slow response from peer reviewers, but authors also need to respond promptly. The editorial team also has a role to play and must attend to reviews in a timely manner. While we desire that the readership and circulation of the journal increase, we cannot afford to lower standards for this purpose. Our objective is therefore to provide a high-quality publication that meets international standards. The quality of a journal is not necessarily dependent on

where it is domiciled but is certainly influenced by the peer-review process it employs.

Publication in ‘International’ or Local’ journals is considered to be an important criterion in appraisal for promotion in many academic institutions including the University of Port Harcourt. While there is no consensus on such classification of journals, the quality of a publication should not be dependent on where it is published, but on the academic content. A journal does not derive its quality from the location of its editorial office but from the quality of its publications.

Several methods for ranking journals exist, but the rating of journals in many institutions is based on the opinions of academic leaders or committees. This method of ranking is unscientific, often politicised, biased and a poor reflection of the actual quality of a journal. The emphasis on ‘international’ ranking for journal publications is unlikely to promote scholarship especially in a setting like ours.

Research and publication in medicine is certainly not the same as in other disciplines. Whereas case reports may be considered insignificant in some fields, a good case report could change medical practice significantly. The pioneering work of Steptoe and Edwards was reported in a landmark case report of the first *in vitro* fertilisation human birth in 1978.<sup>3</sup> Health issues considered to be mundane in some climes may be major public health problems in others and attempts to publish research on such problems are unlikely to be given consideration where they are of little interest. Research work should be assessed based on its merit and not downgraded because it is not published in an ‘international’ journal.

The ‘Index Medicus’ is highly rated for indexing of medical journals, and it is our resolve to be listed in this index soon. Publications in medicine are influenced by the pattern of disease and problems encountered in an environment, which should be the purpose of research. We are therefore extremely delighted by the increasing interest from Nigerian and international authors to publish in our journal. We have improved on the publication process and look forward to increased number of articles and issues in the near future.

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