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Challenging Days

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I was appointed Editor of *Indian Pediatrics* in 1985 by the IAP Executive Board. Before that too, I was closely involved with the scientific aspects of the Journal when Dr SK Bhargava took over as the Editor. He found an excellent, dependable publishing house, Cambridge Press, who have printed the Journal and several other publications for us for over 40 years. The regularity of publication of the Journal has been most remarkable.

I had a strong supporting team constituting the Journal Committee. We focused on the quality of the journal, selecting the articles for publication strictly based on their scientific merit. Preparation of manuscripts according to Vancouver style (rather than “free style”, which required great deal of editing) was insisted upon. Our readers were exhorted to submit their outstanding work to the Journal, which alone would enhance its quality. The contents as well as their presentation were closely scrutinized [1].

The major constraints were financial. The earnings from advertisements were insufficient and moreover, we had to be selective in accepting these. It was, however, emphasized that information about any product should

not be regarded as its promotion.

In 1985 the Journal brought out a supplement “Emergencies in Pediatrics”, which was sold by us directly with all profits going to the Journal [2]. Subsequently, a book entitled “Pediatric and Neonatal Emergencies” was published by our own publishers and again profits from its sale were used towards journal expenses [3].

The Journal celebrated its silver jubilee in 1988. A special number was printed, which included a few Abstracts of outstanding articles published earlier in the Journal [4]. The IAP membership (to whom the Journal was being sent as part of their lifetime subscription) had reached 4200!

The Journal had been housed in the departmental offices of the Editor. Limitation of physical facilities had created increasing hardship. Although makeshift arrangements were eventually made, there remained an urgent need for adequate premises that must include a library and seminar rooms.

I have observed with great satisfaction the progress

made by the Journal over the past years. The excellent standard of the contents and its educative value are widely acknowledged, and it has truly become an international publication. Its free online access is widely utilized and has been very beneficial to readers from countries with limited resources. The indexing and impact factor have increased. The physical qualities of the publication (quality of paper, reproduction of figures, overall attractiveness) are much better.

I wish *Indian Pediatrics* continued growth and all round excellence.

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Contributing to Growth of *Indian Pediatrics*

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Between 1985 and 1994, I became familiar with the editorial processes of *Indian Pediatrics* in various capacities as a Member, Assistant Editor and Publication Secretary of the Journal Committee. Then in late 1994, an unexpected telephonic call informed me of the Executive Committee's decision to immediately elevate me to the helm of affairs. I assumed charge of the editorial process with mixed feelings of disbelief, deep gratitude and anxiety at the onerous responsibility entrusted upon me at a relatively young age. The challenge for me was to not only continue the journal's rapid growth trajectory with the available meager resources but also to make it more influential for clinical practice and public health policy.

The newly constituted think-tank was in substantial agreement with the following envisaged role of journals and editors, particularly in our setting: "*the prime task of an editor is to produce a journal that people will want to read. If the end product is mere units of research, these could just as well be placed directly into databases. Journals must explain, stimulate, provide a forum for discussion, and at times, make readers angry!*" [1]. Being a researcher at the core, I instinctively sought robust evidence to guide our future efforts. After substantial introspection, discussion with close friends and some literature search, we concluded that our art of editing has had minimal, if any, formal research input, particularly from the target audience. It therefore seemed

logical to continue editing with skills imbibed as an "apprentice" while accumulating evidence on a priority basis to guide further action.

TRANSLATING EVIDENCE INTO ACTION

The National Conference of Indian Academy of Pediatrics provided a golden opportunity for conducting qualitative research through in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. This was supplemented with a quantitative "Opinion poll for the desirable content of *Indian Pediatrics*" in the January 1995 issue [2].

A particularly disconcerting observation was the candid admission by some practitioners that they did not even open the issue because the "contents were not useful, attractive, interesting, stimulating or understandable". We then realized that a delicate balance will have to be struck between the aspirations of academicians and active researchers on one hand and the practitioners, particularly in remote areas, on the other hand. The following specific suggestions helped us to fine tune the internal processes and shape the future content of *Indian Pediatrics*: (i) The journal should have "something of interest for everybody in the target audience"; (ii) "Original Articles" should be subjected to more rigorous epidemiological cum statistical review and their Abstracts should be presented in a structured format; (iii) Content of interest to practitioners must be increased