

## Zipping to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Dr. HPS Sachdev, Editor (1995-2001)

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**A**ttention Readers! You are now going to change from a cruiser to an aircraft; this flight will take you to 21<sup>st</sup> century. Dr HPS Sachdev, the ninth editor of *Indian Pediatrics* is the chief pilot, and we are the flight stewards to guide you through this journey.

Indeed, the journey from 1995 to 2001 was speedy as it was characterized by rapid advancements in technology, and tremendous jump in the reputation and popularity of the journal. Dr Sachdev, till date, is the longest serving editor of *Indian Pediatrics*. He completed 13 months of remaining tenure of Dr RK Puri besides his two terms of three years each; and published eighty-five issues of journal under his editorship, an unmatched feat [1]. Being an avid researcher and champion of evidence-based approach, he started his tenure with an opinion poll published in January 1995 issue asking readers to suggest desirable content for the journal. This poll complemented his efforts to seek feedback from academicians during the national conference of the same year. His aim was to make *Indian Pediatrics* a 'reader's journal' rather than a 'recorder journal' while retaining its scientific rigor. His objectives were clearly evident from a quote in his first editorial [2]: "*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!*"

In his first editorial, editor acknowledged that the journal has reached enviable status, and commented: "*I am confident that in due course of time, with God's grace, your endorsement, the contributors' and reviewers' assistance, and continued selfless devotion of the Journal Committee members and National Advisers, Indian Pediatrics will scale greater heights*" [2]. Over a period of time, Dr Sachdev introduced following important changes: rigorous epidemiological cum statistical review of research articles, and introduction of a variety of reader friendly sections such as Immunization Dialogue, Readers' Forum, Viewpoint, News in Brief, Clippings,

Selected Summaries, Personal Practice, Recommendations, Reports, Clinicopathological Conferences and Images in Clinical Practice. The guidelines for authors were published in the January issue under a new name: 'Style matters'. For the first time, the guidelines mentioned uniform criteria for submission of manuscripts to medical journals, and listed authorship criteria.

One of the components of opinion poll conducted by Dr Sachdev was suggestions for relevant topics for 'editorials'. Some important editorials published in 1995 were: Child labor in India by Dr SR Banerjee [3], Pediatric HIV infection by Dr Siddhartha Sen [4], short course chemotherapy in tuberculosis by Dr Kamlesh Chopra [5], oral iron chelators by Dr MB Agarwal [6], prevention of malnutrition by Dr Shanti Ghosh [7], and zinc deficiency by Dr P Bhaskaram [8]. It is interesting to find a letter entitled 'Is INH alone enough for prophylaxis' in January 1995 issue [9]; if you have gone through the most recent (August 2013) issue of *Indian Pediatrics* when there is again a letter entitled 'Is INH waging a lonely losing battle' [10]; controversies do not come with an expiry date. Going through March 1995 issue, one is amused to find an advertisement about a correspondence course in lactation management (**Fig. 1**); most experts in present era will agree that it is akin to learning swimming by correspondence.

Most changes introduced during Dr Sachdev's tenure were apparent from January 1996 issue. Abstracts for original articles were structured, and case reports were published under a section separate from research articles (previously these were published as 'Brief reports'). 'Images in clinical practice' was introduced for the first time in November 1996, and is now a regular feature of the journal. There were regular updates on medical education system and related innovations. Dr Sachdev's keen interest in epidemiology was reflected from the first issue he started editing. Articles dealing with evaluation of research methods were categorized in a section 'Clinical Epidemiology.' Later (May 1999 to July 2001), he published an excellent 12-article series on statistical



FIG. 1 Correspondence course in lactation management.

methods by renowned statisticians Dr A Indrayan and Dr L Satyanarayana. This series caught fancy of naïve readers like me (DS), and helped to understand the basic concepts of biomedical statistics. I still possess a spiral bound compilation of the same in my cupboard, and use it for reference. Dr Sachdev took enough pains to publish summaries of important health statistics and excerpts from important guidelines published in international literature during his tenure; most such information was published with anonymous authorship.

By the end of his first term, *Indian Pediatrics* had managed to raise resources to acquire its own office premises. In his second term, Dr Sachdev and his team introduced changes in packaging of journal, a laminated art card cover in place of art paper. Dr Sachdev was always open to ideas and feedback for continued improvement of the journal. In January 1999 issue, he stated: “*The journal committee is acutely aware of the fact that there is still considerable scope for improving the quality of Indian Pediatrics. We, therefore, request our valued readers to perpetually provide us the necessary impetus and the relevant feed back in this context*” [11]. I remember drafting ‘key messages’ for one of the research paper co-authored by me, taking cues from postgraduate review presentations during my residency at Maulana Azad Medical College. He instantly liked this idea, and incorporated it as an essential component for all original articles to be published in *Indian Pediatrics* from year 2000 onwards.

Dr Sachdev always loved to experiment with technology. Under Dr Sachdev’s leadership, *Indian Pediatrics* was one of the earliest Indian medical journals to launch electronic edition from the April 1998 issue. This not only enhanced the global visibility and reputation of the Journal and the Academy but also resulted in international contributions from reputed authors. In his January 2000 editorial entitled ‘Stepping into Y2K’ [12],

Dr Sachdev visualized that traditional paper periodicals may soon face annihilation or be relegated to a poor second place if they do not upkeep with technology and introduce their electronic versions. He also mentioned monitoring of issues related to publication ethics such as ‘duplicate publication’, ‘gift authorship’ and ‘data falsification’ more stringently. For the sake of transparency and for curbing gift authorship, he introduced the policy of defining the specific role of each author at the end of the manuscript and stating competing interests of the authors.

The quality of the research articles improved tremendously. There was detailed reporting of methodology, including sample size and statistical methods. Some highly cited research articles published during Dr Sachdev’s tenure were: an observational study assessing health needs of a rural population by Bang, *et al.* [13], effect of zinc supplementation on lymphocyte subsets and cell mediated immunity by Sazawal, *et al.* [14] and effects of tactile-kinesthetic stimulation in preterms by Mathai, *et al.* [15]. Brief reviews on newly introduced drugs (cisapride, ceftibuten, artemisinin derivatives, imipenem, teicoplanin) relevant to pediatric practice were published regularly. Consensus guidelines from various IAP chapters on management of common pediatric disorders such as tuberculosis, neonatal cholestasis, nephrotic syndrome, urinary tract infections were published during this period making *Indian Pediatrics* a hugely popular reference material for post graduate students and practitioners.

This journey over the years, with Dr HPS Sachdev at the helm of affairs, was indeed a turning point for *Indian Pediatrics*. He, being in the position of editor-in-chief of the journal for the longest tenure, was a blessing. *Indian Pediatrics* is now a preferred journal for researchers from Indian subcontinent with a wide outreach through print and electronic media. Dr Sachdev not only was a good editor and researcher but was also a great mentor as he imparted his values and skills to people working with him which resulted in continued positive trends in growth and reputation of the journal. In the next issue, one of my colleagues will guide you to travel with Dr Panna Choudhury, a close friend and colleague of Dr Sachdev, and the subsequent Editor-in-Chief of *Indian Pediatrics*.

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