

From Mailbox to Mobile: Indian Pediatrics Goes Green...

September 2018 will be the last month for which the print copies of *Indian Pediatrics* will be sent to all members of Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP), irrespective of their need or desire to read from this 'hard copy' format. From October 2018, we will be sending print copies of the journal to only those members who have communicated to us their requirement to continue so. We have been actively disseminating this information for last seven months to all members through various means – notices in the print copies of the journal, prominent displays at website, periodic e-mails and text messages from IAP, journal office and office of Computer and Medical Informatics Chapter (CMIC) of IAP, and the social media. Those who have not yet sent the request to continue print copies will start receiving the electronic versions (e-copy and key to mobile app) of the journal, and their print copies would stop.

BACKGROUND

IAP was established in 1963 with about 150 pediatricians. In the golden jubilee year 2013, IAP had about 20,000 members. Since then, almost 1500-2000 new members are added every year, taking the total strength to beyond 29,000 currently, and is expected to cross 40,000 in next five years. *Indian Pediatrics*, the monthly official journal of the IAP, also is being published since the inception of IAP in 1963. *Indian Pediatrics* is provided complimentary to members of the IAP, and on subscription to individuals and institutions. Every month, 25,000 hard copies of *Indian Pediatrics* are currently being printed and posted through subsidized bulk mail services of Indian Post. With no substantial increase in infrastructure, logistically it is difficult to print, store and post this huge number of hard copies. Many copies do not reach the members due to wrong/changed postal address or apathy of postal staff. Despite the constraints, the journal office staff and editors have maintained a very strict posting schedule (17th and 18th of every month), and that not once we have missed our posting schedule even by a day [1]. The efforts of our printing press (Cambridge Press, New Delhi) and journal office staff in ensuring this tight schedule, often at the cost of leisure- and family-time, are indeed laudable. Simultaneously, *Indian Pediatrics* has been the pioneer

among Indian medical journals in going digital – introducing electronic processing of manuscripts (1995), launching e-version of articles (1998) [2], a website with free full-text access to all its articles (1999) [3], online manuscript submission, tracking and peer review system (2010) [4], electronic-copy of the journal (2014), social media pages and handles (2014) [5], and the mobile application (2015). These measures have enhanced the global visibility, popularity, stature and scientific quality of *Indian Pediatrics*. The website of *Indian Pediatrics* now receives over 2.5 million hits per month – a tremendous increase of 13800 percent since 2010 [4] – and is often rated as the most accessed journal in the world in its category. These data bear ample testimony to the overwhelming importance of the electronic formats in today's world, and the pace at which your journal has caught up with this global trend [6].

WHY THIS EXERCISE?

"Save paper, Save trees" is no new concept. With electronic revolution, most organizations dependent earlier on paper have gradually shifted to electronic formats. IAP is also working on theme of Digital India – Digital IAP, and is aiming to make the working paperless. The main purpose of this exercise of asking members to send the request for continuing print copies is to reduce (not eliminate) number of printed copies to cut down on high cost and logistics involved in printing 25,000 copies every month. Moreover, for majority of internet- and gadget-savvy readers, the print copy has become redundant, especially when the journal is available freely in digital formats, which can be easily accessed on electronic devices. Simultaneously, we realize that many members and readers are very passionate and particular about reading from the print copies of the journal, and we greatly value them. We want to discontinue print copies for only those members who are only reading electronic formats, for those whose addresses do not exist because of change of location or otherwise, or for those who do not mind not receiving the journals. It is important for all to know that the aim is not to stop or discourage providing print copies to those who are interested in reading anything out of it (even a single page or even for archiving). We just want them to let us know that they want to continue with print copies.

THE PROCESS

As early as in 2014, we started initiatives to develop and promote electronic-versions of the journal in order to reduce print copies. It was decided to develop a mobile application (App) of Indian Pediatrics and promote a full page-to-page electronic copy (e-copy) of the journal. These developments were coupled with appeal to readers to opt-out of hard copy of the journal by advertisements in print and electronic versions of the journal. The App of Indian Pediatrics was developed in association with CMIC of the IAP after a round of consultations and discussions over the features, content and process. The App was launched in November 2015, and was open for download by members from January 2016. The app of Indian Pediatrics is available for iOS- (Apple Inc.) and Android-based phones and devices. It can be downloaded for free, but requires a key to use all the functions. This key was being provided free to those who are opting out of hard copies and opting in for soft copies. E-copy (A cover-to-cover pdf file having the same layout and content as the print copy, including notices and advertisements) of the journal was also being sent to the members who responded to our opt-out appeals.

However, over the next two years, the response of members to opt-out of the print copy was lukewarm, with only about 500 opt-out requests. We thereafter conceived the idea that if we make the electronic versions as the default option, and send print copies to only those who request (opt-in rather than opt-out) to us for the same. Subsequently, this idea was appreciated by the IAP executive board and the General body, and in January 2018, it was passed to be implemented after adequate dissemination of information to all the members over next 3-6 months.

PROGRESS AND CURRENT STATUS

Before we make the electronic formats as the default option, the main task for the journal office was to inform all the 25,000 plus members about the 'Go Green' initiative and their need to send a request for print copies if they wish to continue with it. Notices were prominently printed in every copy of Indian Pediatrics, and members were requested to send request for print copy by e-mail or letter. The efforts to inform the members were intensified from April 2018 onwards. It was also realized that many members did not have their IAP membership number in their records/memory, and which was required to send the preference. Customized text messages and e-mails were sent to all the IAP members, where their membership

number was conveyed to them. A Google form was developed by the CMIC of the IAP, and the link was sent to the members. This form included the option of soft copy as well, though it was going to be the default option anyways later, as we could immediately discontinue print copy and send electronic versions to members opting for soft copy. With these efforts, members responded in large numbers and filled up Google forms indicating their preferences. A pleasant surprise was that almost one-third of members filling up the Google form opted for soft copy rather than print copy of the journal. With many members not responding by filling google form despite repeated communications, it may be assumed that they are not interested in getting the print copy of the journal, and are happy with receiving the default option of electronic versions.

After extending the date of implementation of the default e-version option twice in this year, we are now ready to roll it out from October 2018. Unlike most such 'Go-Green' initiatives, our exercise will not cease once implemented. Members can continue to exercise the option of receiving print copy whenever they realize, and it will even be possible to go back to the option of print copy if they are not comfortable with the electronic versions (e-copy and mobile App, besides a free full-text website). We thank all office bearers and executive board members of IAP in their tremendous support to implement this initiative, and above all to all members of IAP for their cooperation and affection for the journal.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." – Margaret Mead

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