

THE JOURNEY OVER THE YEARS

The Early Years! Editor: Dr. NG Mojumdar!! Years 1967–1969!!!

DEVENDRA MISHRA

Associate Editor, Indian Pediatrics. Correspondence to drdmishra@gmail.com

What does the incoming editor of an infant journal think? How does he plan his task? Perhaps the new editor, having seen the birth pangs of the new journal, joins with a new zeal and new ideas. One can only guess about the second editor's plans from his writings, and the changes made in the journal in his tenure.

The first editorial by Dr NG Mojumdar itself portends new changes [1], although the editor declares himself to be a traditionalist:

With this issue, Indian Pediatrics, starts a new life. The present Editor, being a traditionalist, will try to keep to the tradition of the Journal. That is the reason why no change in the appearance has been made.

The new Editor will try to ensure, that Indian Pediatrics achieves the objective of the official journal of the only national Pediatric Organisation in India. Formulation of these objectives are the result of the discussion that the Editor had with the members of the Academy. He interviewed members of all shades - old, very old, young and very young - at the Madras Conference. The conclusions arrived at were that an association Journal should achieve the following:

This should be a forum for all original work done in India. So that no Pediatrician in India will ever think of sending his work to any foreign journal.

This should be the training ground for young Pediatricians so that they can learn how to present their data.

This should form a medium of communication of the members, so that this journal can help in the future development of the Academy.

This should record the news of the Academy in such a way that a future historian can get all his materials in its pages.

With these objectives in view, the Journal Committee decided to increase its pages. As the former press did not agree to lower the very high rate that they were charging, the committee had to find an equally good press who agreed to help us. As a result it has been possible to increase the volume without any increase in cost.

Due to internal difficulties, the Director of the Institute of Child Health advised us to remove our office from its existing site. We have, therefore, removed our office to a new building (46B Garcha Road, Calcutta - 19).

For these various reasons, we could not publish our Journal when we wanted to do, but hope to regularise in near future. We hope our readers will bear with us.

In the February issue of 1967, the editor states somewhat prophetically, "*Indian Pediatrics should be a source book for future pediatric historians*" [2]. This issue initiates a new practice, that of publishing a 'Conference Number' that contains exhaustive details of the IV National Conference held at Madras, with the Inaugural Address (by the Director General Health Services); Welcome Address by Chairman, Reception Committee (and Director Medical Education, Madras); paper presented by the Director General ICMR; Welcome address by the Mayor of Madras; and the Presidential address being reproduced in full (making up a total of 33 pages). This is, in addition, followed by a 'Brief Resume' of the conference, an editorial related to the conference, and the full program (totaling to another 18 pages) and closing the issue. This practice had its merit in making the deliberations of the conference available to members, who could not attend it (and let them know what they missed!). Why the practice was discontinued later, is not clear. Possibly, in the current era of evidence-based science, publishing talks given by experts is more in the realm of the conference proceedings/souvenir, rather than a peer-reviewed journal. Although, exhaustive and informative, the issue is notable for two aspects. One, the listing of issues in child health in need of medical research by the DG, ICMR [3], and secondly, on a lighter note, the editor's suggestion that "*future conference(s) the afternoon should be kept free for visits to local bodies.....*" A suggestion taken to the heart by quite a few conference delegates in recent years!

Continuing on the theme of conferences, one comes across another editorial, innocuously titled 'Fifth National Conference' [4], which details the plan of the

upcoming conference scheduled in Ahmedabad. The editor suggests that the policy of submission of two copies of papers for conference be changed to include another copy for the journal, submitted directly to it. This need to be viewed in the light of the prevalent convention that all papers presented at the conference were printed in the journal and many speakers failed to submit their paper to *Indian Pediatrics*. The editor also shares his amazement at the whole-hearted participation of various pharmaceutical concerns in the IV National conference [4]. The amazing proportion this involvement has reached in recent times, and its attendant *pros* and *cons*, have already been the subject of many discussions, both in the journal and otherwise!

Another editorial, surprisingly titled 'Letters to the Editor', elaborates on the concept of this section and invites more contributions to it on both scientific and organizational issues [5]. A letter by Prof Harbans Lal from Amritsar in the same issue addresses a topic straddling both these heads – Pediatric research and Publication [6]. His two observations *viz.*, Publish or Perish motto leading to lots of pseudo-research and publication emphasis on case reports, and more emphasis given to articles published in foreign journals; are probably truer today than any time in the past. Backlog of large number of accepted manuscripts was as much a problem for the journal then, as now. It seems to have become really acute in 1967, as is apparent from a drastic step taken by the editor in the April issue, wherein he removes all sections from the journal and publishes only 'scientific communications.' However, the editor does solicit the readers' opinion on the need of continuance of these sections [7], and they promptly reappear next month, possibly on public demand!

The 60's were the time when a clutch of papers on G6PD deficiency in Indian children appeared in the literature, with our journal also contributing [8]. One of the earliest reports on urinary tract infections in children is also published in the same year [9]. Possibly the first case of 'Child Maltreatment' from India is reported in two siblings in this issue [10]. The authors end their article with two observations "*physician can play a crucial role in protecting the abused child*", and "*in India, the problem of cruelty to children deserves investigation;*" predating by four decades similar observations in the more recent Child Rights and Protection Program guidelines [11]. The use of unblinded photographs of patients/subjects was rampant in initial issues. It may well have been according to the publication practice of that era, but was troubling all the same. Thus, it was heartening to note the first article to have a blinded patient photograph [12]. Whether it was done by the

author at his own initiative or editorial policy is not clear. Although, it appears to be the former, as future articles again contain unblinded photographs.

The need for training of medical personnel in medical writing was recognized early-on by the initial leader of IAP and IP and has been a constant endeavor of the subsequent editorial boards. In an editorial titled 'On Medical Writing', Dr Mojumdar underscores some basic principles of good medical writing, following which would both prevent "*unnecessary overwork*" of the editorial team and "*greatly expedite the publication of papers....*" [13]. Another editorial on a related issue is rather humorous. The editor's exasperation is evident from the first line itself "*the kind of references that are appended to the manuscripts received by us will surely drive me mad*" [14]. He touches briefly on various errors in citing references which authors make, and reiterates the basic principles and provides basic guidelines on quoting literature in *Indian Pediatrics*. The problem likely did not resolve despite these persistent attempts, as another untitled note in the next volume (pg 532) again describes briefly how to cite references in the manuscripts submitted to IP. The informal efforts of various Editorial Boards in this regard ultimately bore fruit in the form of the very popular, structured, hands-on workshops on 'Art and Science of Writing a Paper', which are being conducted by your journal for the last five years.

One complete issue of 1967 was dedicated to Pediatric education in India. Papers presented on the topic in the symposium during the IV National conference at Madras, 1967 were published in full. Papers by SC Sheth [15], PN Taneja [16], and FJW Miller [17] address both postgraduate and undergraduate pediatric education. In addition, an editorial on the topic reiterates the core concepts. The issue ends with a questionnaire on pediatric education in medical colleges in India, by Dr PN Taneja [18]. To many of the younger pediatricians, the topic, pediatric education, may not appear really important; however, it needs to be viewed in the context of the situation at that time when pediatrics was not a separate subject in undergraduate examinations, and many colleges did not even have a separate pediatric department. In a similar vein, two view points on definition of a pediatrician are found in a single issue of the journal; one in the editorial [19] and another in a letter by Dr Shanti Lal Sheth [20].

Although not evident on going through the previous issues, one comes to know that in 1967, the February issue could only be published in June, and the subsequent 7-8 issues were published in the next 2½ months [21]. The editorial also talks of political trouble, without

elaborating further, and one is not sure whether it was something external or within the Academy. Another editorial in a previous issue, although innocuously worded, apparently signifies initial rumblings of discontent in the IAP [22]. A unique experiment was undertaken to decide the cover of the journal, and is detailed here in its entirety: “*Many members voiced their dislike for the color of the cover of the journal. So we printed our journal in different colors this year so that we can finally select a suitable permanent color*” [23]. After the ‘trials and tribulations’ of the previous issues, the December issue ends the year on a positive note. The editor notes with relief the “*great progress towards independence of Indian Pediatrics*”, with its own office (and not dependent “on any other organization”) and new staff (“wholly devoted to *Indian Pediatrics*”) [23].

The year 1968 starts with the first issue containing a collection of articles on Indian Childhood Cirrhosis (ICC) with an accompanying editorial. A clinico-pathological study of 100 ICC cases is a notable article [24]. In ‘Academy news’ section, suggestions are invited for the design of the emblem of the Academy from the members of the academy. The conference issue of the year had the address on problems in pediatrics by the president of MCI [25], and the presidential address by Dr PM Udani [26]. From Prof Udani’s address we have the first inkling of the size of the Academy at that time: 300 life members and 200 associate members. The first IAP Committee on Immunization (IAPCOI) sent a questionnaire related on immunization to all members of the Academy and other stakeholders to solicit relevant information, and their first report was published in 1968 [27]. There were only three members *viz.*, SC Sheth as chairman, SM Merchant and PM Udani. If we contrast this with the current IAPCOI, the number seems to be rising in proportion to the number of available vaccines!

The first editorial by a non-editor (invited editorial) is on the subject of pediatric conferences [28]. An announcement is noted in the September issue for a Medal in the memory of Dr ST Achar (whose obituary was carried in the previous issue), for young members of IAP (less than 10 years professional standing), “*to commemorate the memory of a pioneer research worker of our country*”, during the Sixth National conference to be held in Lucknow [29]. The editor also talks of a ‘new’ approach utilized in the scientific program; to quote “*for symposiums, this year set speakers have not been arbitrarily selected, —; so that these symposium (sic) may be more scientific, practical, and more on the field workers’ level*” [29]. It was refreshing to read these lines today, when a similar concept was reintroduced in selecting the speakers for the PEDICON 2013. Ironically,

after 45 years, the current Editor-in-Chief, Piyush Gupta was the main architect of the Science at the just concluded Golden Jubilee PEDICON at Kolkata. The editorial in the November, 1968 issue on delay in publication of articles and resultant queries [30], is so apt even today, that one is compelled to reproduce a major portion of it verbatim here:

EDITORIAL: Prompt Publication of Articles

ALMOST every day we get a letter or two asking us the reason why an author’s article is not published promptly. We must admit that the lateness in publication of a communication by an author who has worked for many months over it makes him disappointed. He is just like the father who has implanted his seed and is anxiously waiting for the child to come out. So an explanation from our side on the subject has now become almost imperative.

Ours is an association journal and in an attempt to be fair to the members, articles are generally published according to the date of receipt except when rare diseases are reported or the paper is read in International Conferences. With the number of original articles we receive no review article is generally recommended for publication due to want of space.

All articles are sent to referees, mostly experts on the subject. They send them back after scrutiny. If they recommend the publication, we put the article in line with the selected articles. This whole process takes some months. But as already stated, we receive more articles than we can publish immediately, for example, the articles that we have got with us will take us up to August 1969, unless we can increase our pages.

This is for those articles which are recommended. Unfortunately, the referees are not always able to recommend prompt publication of all the articles sent to them for various faults detected by them. They want clarification. We are listing below the common faults that are responsible for delay in publication. These are:-

1. The references do not conform to the directions given in Editorial Communication. We are to write many letters to and fro for this and this creates some lateness in publication. For example, we wanted to publish an article in January 1968 but as the references were incomplete we had to wait up to October before we could get the correct references and that also were not complete. One author has written that as the reference refers to a standard book anybody can look up the page, but curiously enough he himself could not do so and put the number of the page in his paper. Hence with all our efforts we are to publish references which do not conform to the standard practice.

2. The illustrations and tables are not properly labeled and referred properly in the text. To get the correct version again takes time causing deferment of publication and sometimes wrong printing.
3. The author does not refer to other workers on the subject either in India or outside. An excellent article is lying with us almost for two years, as the authors never bothered to reply to our several letters not to speak of sending us the revised article.
4. Our letters are not properly read and attended to. We are to write more than one letter on the same subject, as the revised article does not conform to the instructions given in our letter.
5. The form and the contents of the article do not conform to the style of Indian Pediatrics. And we are to rewrite many of these articles, or send them back. All these not only take time and delay in publication but cause many errors in the final version of the article.

Our authors can therefore help us to publish their articles more promptly if they conform to the above points. Our readers and members can help us in another manner also. We are not having as many advertisements as we should. If each member gets a new advertisement for us we can increase the bulk of the Journal and can publish more articles every month, which will lead to prompter publication.

A gray colored *Indian Pediatrics* cover greets me as I open the 1969 bound volume, followed for the first time by a Contents page containing section headings of case records and editorial. A seminal article in the issue is on the development of Indian babies; the so-called 'Baroda norms' [31]. The first case of lead poisoning from India is reported in 1969 [32]. The first double-blind study in the journal, on the antipyretic effect of Indomethacin suppositories, is also published the same year [33]. An interesting article noted was a study on the effect of a 'no bath regimen' on prevention of hospital infections in neonates [34]. One was intrigued by the contention of a commentator in one of the editorial that "...we rarely find prematures in private practice nowadays" [35].

Dr SC Shet, a senior pediatrician, was elected head of the Medical Council of India in 1969, which received prominent space in the journal [36]. In the annual report of the working of the IAP for year 1968 [37]; the secretary informs about the Academy's decision to publish a book on pediatrics for the use of undergraduates, a lofty idea which ultimately bore fruit after many years. The financial position of the Academy takes up quite some space in the report. It is interesting to note that "*the Academy depends to a large extent on the contribution from the journal for*

meeting its various commitments." The General Secretary eloquently states "...augmenting our resources if we are to prevent the Academy from reaching a state of *marasmus*." Also, the secretary notes with concern that less than 50% of the ordinary members of the academy voted in the election (total members 590). He appealed to the members to exercise their right of vote in the interests of the Academy. Comparing this with 6133 votes polled for IAP election 2013 [37], when we have nearly 20,000 members; one is amused to know that at least in one aspect we are continuing the tradition over the years!

The last editorial by Dr Mojumdar at the end of his tenure, and after a decision had been taken to shift the journal office outside Calcutta, is reproduced here in its poignant entirety [39]:

Editorial: Love's Labour Lost

This is the last issue of the Journal which will bear my name as the Editor and I thank all those who helped me in various ways during the last three years of my arduous work.

I never wanted to be the Editor of Indian Pediatrics. It was forced on me on the plea that the Journal office cannot be shifted from Calcutta as that was one of the conditions of amalgamation of the two Societies. But now I find that it is not true.

Indian Pediatrics is an Association Journal and its Editor has got certain responsibilities. He must see that the younger authors get the same opportunity as the eminent ones. Under no circumstances he should allow himself to be brow-beaten by anybody. We have established that tradition against great odds.

Young authors must be taught how to present facts, references, tables and illustrations. This was done in several Editorials, and in individual cases, articles have been completely rewritten.

It was also necessary to train people for the office, so that the routine may become automatic, which we have been able to do. Now was the time to go in for finer things.

I had to work hard to achieve all these and much more remain to be done. Wylie has said, "there is no better gift than the gift of one's time," and he calls this as a "priceless gift". In my love for the Academy I gave this "Priceless gift" quite a lot of it for Indian Pediatrics, but alas! all my labor is lost, as my successor will not derive any benefit from my hard work of last three years.

We continue the journey in the next issue with a change in the setting: from Calcutta to Delhi.

REFERENCES

1. Mojumdar NG. Indian Pediatr. 1967; 4: 58-9.

2. Editorial. The conference number. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967; 4: 102-3.
3. Taneja BL. Trends and opportunities in medical research with special reference to child health. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967; 4: 75-82.
4. Editorial. Fifth national conference. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:274.
5. Editorial. Letters to the editor. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:136.
6. Lal H. research and publication. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:157.
7. Editorial. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967; 4: 202.
8. Da Costa H, Pattani J, Mehandle K, Desai M, Merchant SM. Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase defect in Indian children. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:163-8.
9. Prasad LSN, Sen DK, Sinha KP. Clinico-bacteriological study of urinary infections in children. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:321.
10. Bhattacharyya AK, Mandal JN. Battered child syndrome: a review with a report of two siblings. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:186-94.
11. Aggarwal K, Dalwai S, Galagali P, Mishra D, Prasad C, Thadani A. Recommendations on recognition and response to child abuse and neglect in the Indian setting. *Indian Pediatr* 2010; 47: 493-504.
12. Samadi A. The Laurence-Moon-Bardet-Biedl syndrome. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:198-199.
13. Editorial. On medical writing. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:239.
14. Editorial. On references. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:338-9.
15. Sheth SC. Medical education-Pediatrics. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:371.
16. Taneja PN. Undergraduate pediatric education. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:375.
17. Miller FJW. Post-graduate pediatric education present and future. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:379.
18. Indian Academy of Pediatrics. Questionnaire on pediatric education in medical colleges in India. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:386-92.
19. Editorial. Who is a paediatrician? *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:305-6.
20. Sheth SC. Pediatrician of the present generation. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4: 307.
21. Editorial. Trials and tribulations. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:422.
22. Editorial. Members of a learned society. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:367.
23. Editorial. *Indian Pediatr.* 1967;4:456-7.
24. Dayal RS, Mathur GP, Prasad R, Wahi PN. Indian childhood cirrhosis: Clinico-pathological study of 100 cases. *Indian Pediatr.* 1968; 5:17-23.
25. Patel CS. Problems in pediatrics. *Indian Pediatr.* 1968; 5: 58-65.
26. Udani PM. Presidential address. *Indian Pediatr.* 1968; 5: 66-72.
27. Academy News. Report of the Committee on Immunization. *Indian Pediatr.* 1968; 5:137-44.
28. Tibrewala NS. Pediatric conferences. *Indian Pediatr.* 1968; 5:77-78.
29. Editorial. Sixth national conference. *Indian Pediatr.* 1968; 5:432-3.
30. Editorial. Prompt publication of articles. *Indian Pediatr.* 1968;5:536-7.
31. Phatak P. Motor and mental development of Indian babies from 1 month to 30 months. *Indian Pediatr.* 1969;6:18-23.
32. Joshua GE. Chronic lead poisoning: Recurrent encephalopathy in a child. *Indian Pediatr.* 1969;6:329-37.
33. Kerawalla FC, Rele RV, Mehta KA. Antipyretic effect of Indomethacin suppositories: A double-blind study. *Indian Pediatr.* 1969;6:422-25.
34. Bhakoo ON, Lall JC, Agarwal KC. Prevention of hospital infections in neonates: an evaluation of no bath regimen. *Indian Pediatr.* 1969; 6:697-700.
35. Editorial. On prematurity. *Indian Pediatr.* 1969; 6:51.
36. Academy News. *Indian Pediatr.* 1969; 6:348.
37. Tibrewala NS. Annual report. *Indian Pediatr.* 1969;6: 218-21.
38. Indian Academy of Pediatrics. IAP Election 2013. Available from://www.iapindia.org/component/content/article/362. Accessed on 20 January, 2013.
39. Mojumdar NG. Love's labour lost. *Indian Pediatr.* 1969;6:812.