

## Editing the Academy's Journal in the Peri-COVID Era – A Different Ball Game Altogether!

**H**aving been associated with *Indian Pediatrics* editorial board for more than 15 years, I complete my three-year tenure as editor-in-chief (EIC), and move on to the fourth year. This post was the culmination of a long academic journey, and was taken up with lofty ideals and a bunch of new ideas [1]. I find this an appropriate time to reflect on issues related to editing the journal of a professional society, especially in the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) times, and also touch upon the changes in the journal.

### COVID-19 and the Journal

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the publication of medical journals has not received as much interest, as the other effects of the epidemic. The intervening pandemic presented unique challenges to the publication of the journal. The COVID-induced lockdowns in the city forced the closure of the printing press, and also the journal office. However, the extensive support of the journal staff and the editorial board worked as a buttress to the publication process, which continued unhindered [2]. This led to the timely publication of all the online issues of the journal, which were later sent to the subscribers through the ever-reliable India Post, once the lockdown partially lifted.

The editorial response of the journal to the pandemic was also spot-on, with the first COVID-related guidelines to inform readers published on March 29, 2020 [3], within two months of the first case of the disease in India. One unintentional effect of the lockdown was the increased number of submissions to the journal (many of these COVID-related), and a very quick response from editors and reviewers. Later, this was reflected in the Journal Citation Report, 2022, when the journal's metrics had a major increase, a trend that was seen by many other journals [4].

### New Sections

Quite a few innovations were thought-of and initiated, some of which succeeded and others fizzled out. A 'Pediatric subspecialties' section was introduced to promote publication of papers from the fields of pediatric radiology, pediatric dentistry, pediatric orthopedics and

pediatric dermatology [1]. Despite wide publicity, hardly any submissions were received, and these too did not clear the peer-review process. On the other hand, 'Iconic pediatric institutions of India' section saw an enthusiastic response from the invited authors, and also received bouquets from the readers. This section was meant to provide a historical perspective on the development of child health in India, through the lens of the major institutions working in this field [1].

*Journal ki baat*, a monthly online discussion between authors, editors, and readers (one pediatrician in practice and one postgraduate pediatric resident from different regions of the country), was well received both by the panelists and the viewers. Having held 16 episodes till now [5], this platform, in addition to connecting the journal to the academy's members, also provides an important post-publication review for the authors. The whole-hearted involvement of the moderators Dr. Amit Upadhyay and Dr. Abhijit Saha remains the cornerstone of this activity.

### Indian Pediatrics Case Reports (IPCaRes)

Initiated by Prof. Piyush Gupta, CIAP President, 2021, *IPCaRes* was started in 2021 by the journal to provide an avenue to the academy members to publish case reports, without strict restrictions on word count and numbers of figures/tables [6]. With eight issues published in the last two years, it continues to be a vibrant medium of scientific reporting and discussion, with additional content on soft skills like ethics and communication [7]. The journal is going from strength to strength under the tutelage of Dr. Sharmila M Bannerjee, and getting it indexed is the next activity scheduled.

### Social Media Presence

The journal already had a Facebook page and was on Twitter since 2015. We debuted on Instagram in 2020 (@indianpediatrics) and on LinkedIn in 2021 (www.linkedin.com/in/indian-pediatrics-342975218). A team of young pediatricians were taken onboard to take up the responsibility of posting on these sites, under supervision of a designated editorial board member. Posting about important articles, and the early online articles, and

disseminating information about journal activities became easier and more effective through these platforms, and also increased the journal's reach to the younger generation of pediatricians.

### Editorial Freedom

Editorial freedom, as per the World Association of Medical Journal Editors (WAME), is that the EIC has full authority over the entire editorial content of their journal, and the timing of publication of that content [8]. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors additionally suggests that the EIC should have the final say in decisions about sponsored content/advertisements the journal carries [9]. Working with the office bearers and the executive board of Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) over the last three years, I never found any of my editorial decisions hindered or 'influenced.'

### Something New!

We plan to start a new section this year, '*Pediatric Subspecialties in India*.' This section will trace the growth of pediatric subspecialties in India, for the benefit of the younger generation of pediatricians, and will also showcase the contribution of many senior pediatricians, a few of whom remain unsung.

It was an exhilarating journey with many lessons learnt, but I end this tenure with the satisfaction that the journal remained a platform for debate on issues pertaining to child health as a whole, and not limited it self to being a journal just reporting on research alone. Ultimately, it is the readers and authors who are the final authority on the quality of a journal, and I feel that the journal scores highly with them.

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