IPEJ: The journey continues

Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached — Katha Upanishad, chapter 1.3.14

Every journey starts with a small step forward, and every step in it carries a dream along. The initial steps in this journal’s odyssey were by the founder editor, Prof. Johnson Francis, and he carried it as a dream for many years of this journey. Many joined him, nurtured the journal well and helped it grow up to teens. And, all of them who joined him along the way, including myself, shared that common dream—establish a journal in electrophysiology of international repute.

Since its inception as an online open access journal in October 2001 to the present status as a journal of international repute that is indexed in PubMed, Indian Pacing and Electrophysiology Journal (IPEJ) had gone through many progressive steps. These major developments resulted from sheer voluntary contribution of time and effort of the editorial team. Till 2009, Dr. Francis, the founder and executive editor of the journal, was assisted by 3 initial editors-in-chief of the journal—Dr. Balbir Singh, Dr. Yash Lokhandwala and Dr. Calambur Narasimhan. In late 2009, I got the opportunity to join as the first associate editor of the journal. Since then, we had the privilege to have the help from many associate editors and reviewers, whose contribution had always been a source of inspiration for us. Through the years, the journal has achieved wider appeal, acceptance and appreciation amongst the scientific community. And, with time, researchers from major international research centres started submitting manuscripts to IPEJ.

Limited number of journals in the speciality of cardiac electrophysiology, an inherent advantage IPEJ always had, offered a greater potential for the journal to gain wider acceptability. The members in the editorial team and Indian Heart Rhythm Society shared this view, and hence a conscious effort was made to move to a new publishing platform. The need for huge funding and a few logistic reasons retarded the pace on this diversion to a publisher of repute initially, and it required nearly a year’s tireless effort to reach at the interim destination of this new publishing platform. As a result of these forward steps, this month, we celebrate a milestone in the history of IPEJ journal—the first issue with Elsevier. Indeed, a tremendous accomplishment for the society, editorial team and all of the scientists whose contributions have made the journal what it is today.

Now, with a publisher of international repute that makes our work indefinitely easier, what additional steps are required for a medical journal to have wider acceptability? A rapid review process, quality articles, regularity of issues, better impact factor… the list goes on. Limitations in any could adversely affect the progress of the journal that has just reached in its early teens. A journal that wants to be great, looks for good articles, while good articles look for a great journal. Invariably, this complex interdependency exists and gets sorted somewhere in the saga of every journal. And, we are optimistic that the new publishing platform will help us get beyond these barriers soon.

An editor’s challenges vary from ethical and moral to practical concerns. The conflicting features of science, medicine and journalism that are bound to meet in a medical journal make an editor’s job inherently difficult. In fact, unlike their counterparts on basic sciences, medical journals tend to keep closer to journalism than science, often overloading their pages with images, letter to the editors, update, case reports etc.—categories that seek lower levels of evidence. Ideally, medicine and science are bound to carry strong ethical commitment, ought to put greater emphasis on primum non nocere—one of the primary ethical principles of medical practice, and resist publishing manuscripts that could corrupt the collective scientific knowledge. The recent exponential growth of journals also force many journals to publish materials of limited relevance. To confound these ethical and moral issues, practical issues like improper peer review, conflicts of ethics in publishing and the influence of...

Peer review under responsibility of Indian Heart Rhythm Society.
pharmaceutical industry step in and cloud the objectivity of medical publishing to a larger extent.

Still, one would easily agree that the medical journals serve as the major link between science and practice, and this is especially true in a field like cardiac electrophysiology, where the application of basic knowledge in practice is ever evolving. And, only that fact gives me the direction necessary to move forward in this journey as the editor of this journal. Even while my young infant twin girls, only as old as my tenure as the editor-in-chief of this journal, compete for my attention with the journal, along with other members of the editorial team in this journey with a great IPEJ as our common destination, I wish to remind myself that “I know how the distance between the dreams and the reality can seem to be scary. But for me, my dream is one long journey and I am ready to take every step on the route”.

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