

## **An Official Publication as a New Journal - scope, need and challenges**

**Arunima Verma<sup>1\*</sup>**

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1 MS, FRCS, FACS, FIAGES, EFIAGES, HOD General Surgery, Tata Motors Hospital, Jamshedpur

**\*Correspondence:**

Dr Arunima Verma,  
vermaarunima@yahoo.co.in

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In the era of evidence based medicine, the most important requirement is valid scientific literature based on which decision making in clinical surgery can rely and establish best practices. The pool of scientific literature is created by publication. However, the pressure created by the “Publish or Perish” phrase, nowadays has made publications a double edged sword. On one hand, frequent publication is considered a powerful way for a scholar to bring attention to themselves and their institution, as well as demonstrate their academic talent. On the other hand, the pressure to increase the number of publications has led to unethical practices and is forcing towards creating publishable research which is fraudulent and may ultimately harm our patients.

The purpose today of publishing is not contributing to scientific literature and developing a knowledge bank, but to make the curriculum vitae impressive. Also the universities have focused more on publications rather than teaching ability while hiring faculty which might lead to compromise in quality education in the long run. Also, the growing demand for increase in publication has led to the emergence of multiple “predatory journals” which publish scientific articles of questionable quality with the threat to integrity of medical science and huge potential of misleading

scientists, doctors and also patients who rely on the information they provide.

The Association of Surgeons of India, which was formed in 1938, was due to the felt need by the surgeons of the country to have a forum where they could share their ideas, experiences and expertise. Association of Rural Surgeons of India was then formed in 1993 with the aim to take appropriate surgery to the doorsteps of the rural population. With two-third population in India residing in rural areas, and rural surgeons providing live-saving and essential surgeries across multiple specialities in low-resource settings, they are left out and remain unrecognized as very few journals accept their article, while surgeons from premier institutions leverage the institutional power to publish in high impact journals and advance their career. Here comes the role of an official publication which is defined as “any item, produced by reprographic or any other method, issued by an organization that is an official body and available to audience wider than the body”. Publishing an official journal may sound overwhelming and unnecessary, but it gives an opportunity to engage members in a new unique way and unify the organization along with promoting academic excellence. Also, the process and ownership is of the whole organization, so chances of

withdrawal is less, though the commitment required is high. Need and scope being defined, the major challenge is receiving articles from various contributors. The reason maybe multiple, but broadly are two – one members who have never published are hesitant due to lack of confidence in potential of their work being publishable, and second are those with academic arrogance questioning the impact of the journal, failing to acknowledge that it is a collective responsibility to raise the bar and positively impact the organizational climate and collective engagement.

Young surgeons are in a haste to make their curriculum vitae attractive by publishing their article somewhere. Often they are frustrated by a series of rejections, and at times also mistrust the quality of their own work, and a predatory journal, offering rapid peer review processes and publication times, appears a viable solution even if it comes at a cost of APC (article processing charge). Hence, a word of caution is that the predatory journals are only based on considerations of cost-effectiveness, so if it becomes unprofitable, it may be closed and all published articles in that journal will be lost.

With the internet availability reaching each part of the world, facts, figures, information and knowledge in each area including medical science is widely available to all. Medical professionals and patients both use it for different reasons and developing a knowledge bank will make the access to best practices, lessons learned and innovation easier. The role of capturing work from both the urban and rural surgeons is important as the premier institutes give us the validated guidelines and rural surgeons innovation can be groundbreaking. There must be multiple innovative techniques used to overcome material and infrastructural constraints in the country's marginalised rural population to offer the operations they need. The examples of Dr Radhakrishna D Prabhu, who pioneered the technique of collecting and retransfusing one's own blood, today known as autologous blood transfusion, and Dr Ravi Tongaonkar, who invented the idea of using sterilised mosquito nets as a cost-effective alternative to commercial hernia mesh are examples of the ingenuity of these remarkable rural surgeons.

India has emerged as the fifth largest economy in the world, but rural India still dominates. Jharkhand is primarily a rural state with only 24% urban population. The importance of research in patient

care cannot be denied, but we need to be vigilant that we do not get into unethical practice and wasteful research. The citation index gauges the acceptance and appreciation of an article, however majority of articles go uncited. An official publication through an association with credibility offering platform to all members to showcase the variety of good work done across the community might be useful for developing a knowledge bank for better and practical education of students in future.

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