

LETTER TO EDITOR

Where to Publish? Choosing the Right Journal for Research Work

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Abstract:

Communication in science is as important as the research work. The process of research is incomplete till it is published in a good quality journal. To make aware the researchers about different types of journals publishing health research and their quality, an attempt has been made to throw light on what are the most suitable journals for publication of the research work?, which are acceptable to the apex bodies regulating health sciences; Education especially for researchers from developing countries like India.

Keywords: Quality journals, Indexing, Impact Factor, Peer Review

Introduction:

Publish or perish is the system followed in western world. In United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA), everything is linked with publication. To get a job, to get annual increment, to get promotion to the higher post and continuation of job in the same post (to keep the job) are linked with publications. In short, the academic career depends upon list of publication [1]. Similar things are slowly being implemented in India also. As per the recent guidelines of Medical Council of India (MCI), for promotion to the post of Associate Professor, publication of two papers in indexed journals is obligatory and for further promotion to the post of Professor two more papers are needed to be published [2].

Dental Council of India (DCI) also insists for publication points to start post graduate courses in dental sciences. As per the DCI guidelines Professor and Head of Department needs to have 40 points, second professor 30 points and reader needs to have 20 points. These points are awarded on the basis of publications. The criteria are 15 points to first author, if paper is published in indexed journals or society or association journals of respective subjects and 7.5 points to rest of the authors. If paper is in non-indexed journal or in journals other than association or society journals, five points to first author and 2.5 points to rest of the authors [3].

Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS), Nashik is also insisting now for four research papers to become post graduate teacher and five research papers in the National / International Journal(s) having impact factor of 0.5 or more to become Ph.D. guide. Hence, publication of paper is becoming the most important part of academic career. Thus, research is becoming very crucial to sustain quality in higher education, especially in health sciences [4,5].

Where to Publish? What are The Opportunities?

Publication of research work is an essential component/part of research life and hence choosing where to publish? is an important consideration [6]. There are plenty of opportunities to publish. There are uncountable numbers of journals published from almost all parts of the globe and in recent years there is mushrooming of medical journals, hence no work can be left unpublished. But choosing of appropriate journals for research work is very important in reaching the appropriate audience.

What are the different types of journals?

1. Institutional/College/Hospital level journals

Majority of these journals have International Standard Serial Number (ISSN). It is not a big thing to get this number. Anybody can get this number. Majority of them are not indexed in standard indexing system. Some of them may be indexed in indexing system, which are not of high quality and are not acceptable to regulating bodies. Publication in such journals is meaningless as these publications may not be considered valid. Although majority of them are qualitatively poor, some of them are exceptionally good, e.g., Journal of Post Graduate Medicine published by staff society of Seth G S Medical College and KEM Hospital Mumbai, Bulletin of Medical Education and Research published by Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh, Current Medicine Research and Practice (formerly, The Ganga Ram Journal) published by the Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi, etc.

2. University level Journals

Some universities, especially Deemed and Private universities publish their own journals, as it is mandatory to maintain National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and Deemed Status. Majority of them are like Institutional/College like journals, which are not included in standard indexing systems. Publication in such journals may not be considered worthy. However, some of them are exceptionally good, e.g., Journal of Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences University, indexed in many standard indexing system including SCOPUS, Thomson Reuters, EBSCO, Index Copernicus and People's Journal of Scientific Research indexed in Index Copernicus.

3. State level/Regional Journals

In the present situation, these journals are outdated because everybody wants to name their journal as National or International journal. Some state/regional level journals are still published, e.g., Journal of Delhi Ophthalmology Society indexed in Index Copernicus. Many other journals from this category are not indexed in standard indexing system.

4. So called National Journals

In the recent years, there is sprouting of many so called National Journals. Majority of them have ISSN number, but they are not indexed in standard indexing system. Many of them ask for processing charges. They are sort of pay and publish anything you want. It is not worthy to publish in such journals.

5. So called International Journals

In the recent years, there is mushrooming of many so called International journals published from India and abroad. These are also not indexed in standard indexing system like PubMed, SCOPUS, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, etc. Majority of them - almost all ask for processing charges. Although it increases the length of your curriculum vitae, publications in such journals is also not meaningful.

6. National Journals with Wide International Circulation (or National Journals with International Recognition)

Majority of the old national journals published by association or research bodies like Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) are very good journals. Majority of them have impact factor and are indexed in standard indexing systems. Publications in such journals are valid and acceptable to MUHS as well as MCI. Some of the best National level journals in decreasing order of their standard on International as well as National Level are Indian Journal of Medical Research (IJMR), Indian Pediatrics, Journal of Post Graduate Medicine, Indian Journal of Experimental Biology (IJEB), Indian Journal of Medical Microbiology (IJMM), Indian Journal of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprology (IJDVL), Journal of Vector Borne Diseases, Indian Journal of Orthopaedics (IJO), Indian Journal of Pathology and Microbiology (IJPM), National Medical Journal of India, Indian Journal of Biochemistry and Biophysics and few others [7,8].

7. International Journals

International journals published from UK, USA, Japan, Australia and other developed countries by Elsevier, Willey, Springer, Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, Wolters Kluwer, etc. are very good journals. They are indexed in standard indexing system and they have impact factor too. There are two categories of these journals; both of them are equally good. Majority of the journals published from UK do not charge article processing charges or page charges, hence these journals are affordable and preferable for researchers from developing countries like India. Majority of the journals published from USA and Japan ask for page charges around \$50 per page, hence not affordable. Quality wise these are the best journals and publication of paper in such journals is highly creditable. Some of the topmost examples of these journals are New England Journal of Medicine, The Lancet, British Medical Journal, Nature, Science, Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA), Journal of Clinical Microbiology, British Journal of Surgery, British Journal of Dermatology, Journal of Medical Microbiology, Journal of Hospital Infection and many others [9-11].

7. Online Journals

These are the journals published online only and do not have a print issue. They do have the standard ISSN and some of them are really very good, which are indexed in standard indexing system and have impact factor, e.g., PLOS one, Journal of Infection, International Wound Journal.

How Do You Identify A Relevant Journal?

Selection of an appropriate journal to reach the appropriate audience is very important part in the research process. You need to check for following things before you submit your paper for publication:

1. Is it a peer-reviewed journal?

Scholarly journals are mostly peer-reviewed (evaluation of research paper by one or more person of similar competence to the authors of the research paper); hence it is important to see that journal in which you are going to submit your paper is peer-reviewed or not, because publication in journals which are not peer – reviewed is not creditable.

2. What is the subject area of the journal?

Subject area of the journal is very important. If subject area of the journal is not relevant to the topic of your research then do not consider that journal for publication of your research work. Sometimes what happens “you want to go in the direction of EAST but you go towards WEST.” If your topic of research is not within the scope of journal in which you want to submit your paper may be rejected straight away without peer review, e. g., if your research work is on chronic gastritis with special reference to *Helicobacter pylori* based on histopathological findings and if you submit this work for publication in renowned microbiology journal, your article may be rejected straight away stating that it is not within the scope of the journal. To quote another example, if your research work is pertaining to wounds of upper extremities and if you submit this research work for publication in International Journal of Lower Extremity Wounds then also your paper is rejected. If at all your paper is accepted for publication, it fails to take your research to an appropriate audience.

3. Is it aimed at the audience you want to write for?

This is also very important, if you want to reach the maximum number of researchers/ academicians/other appropriate audience of your field to which you want to reach.

4. What is the impact factor of the journal?

The journals having impact factor assigned by Thomson Reuters are considered as standard journals. Some journals project their impact factor on their website or cover page, which is not assigned by Thomson Reuters. It is either assigned by some other agency or it is calculated by journal itself. Such journals are not considered as standard journals. A journal having an impact factor – value of more than one is considered as a standard journal. Such journals are considered internationally competent whether they are published from India or any part of the world that does not matter and are considered as good quality journals irrespective of place of their publication. MUHS also insists for three publications in journals having impact factor more than one to become inspectors/ assessors for various Undergraduate and Post Graduate inspections/assessments of university. Majority of the journals from UK, USA and Japan have impact factor values but not all journals. Around 50 Indian journals have impact factor value and some 15 journals have impact factor value more than one, e.g., IJMR, IJMM, Journal of Postgraduate Medicine, Journal of Vector Borne diseases, IJEB, Indian Pediatrics, Indian Journal of Ophthalmology, Indian Journal of Biochemistry and Biophysics and few more.

If journal has no impact factor then see for *h*-index. *h*-index serves as an alternative to traditional journal impact factor in the evaluation of the impact. Majority of Indian Journals have *h*-index [10, 12-14].

5. Is it indexed?

The journals which are indexed in standard indexing system are considered as standard journals. Before you submit your paper, you need to see whether it is indexed in standard indexing system or not.

The following are considered as standard indexing systems:

- I. Science Citation index introduced by Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) and now part of Thomson Scientific generally accessed through the Web of Science is considered as most standard indexing system. It is the one which assigns an impact factor to journals in its journals citation reports (JCR). If the journal in which you are submitting your paper has no impact factor, it means that the journal has not been accepted by ISI. Around 50 Indian Journals are indexed in Science Citation Index [8-13].

II. Index Medicus/MEDLINE/MEDLARS

An indexing system of US National Library of Medicine (NLM) started in 1879 as an index medicus/cumulated index medicus - a printed version-last issue published in December, 2004. Indexing is based on the journals scientific policy and scientific quality. National Library of Medicine in 1964 launched it as MEDLINE (Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System) or MEDLARS- a computerized biomedical bibliographic retrieval system. It became available in late 1971. This database is freely accessible via the PubMed. Only standard journals are included on the recommendations of a panel, the Literature Selection Technical Review Committee based on scientific scope and quality. These journals are considered as standard journals. Many Indian journals are indexed in MEDLINE.

III. PubMed

It is a free database accessing primarily the MEDLINE database of references and abstracts on life sciences and biomedical topics. The journals indexed in PubMed are found in the NLM Catalogue.

IV. Other Indexing Systems

In addition to this, there are many other indexing systems. These include:

SCOPUS, Open J Gate

Excerpta Medica/EMBASE, Academic Index Index Copernicus, Bioline International

EBSCO, Current Contents

Indian Science Abstract and DOAJ

The SCOPUS, EMBASE and Index Copernicus are also considered as valid indexing system as per new norms of MCI [11, 15].

Always remember that publication of paper in journals indexed in standard indexing system is meaningful than papers published in non-indexed journals or journals not indexed in standard indexing systems. So always try for publication in journals indexed in standard indexing system.

The MUHS Ph.D. directions states that research scholar who will publish five papers on Ph. D. thesis topic after formal registration will be awarded Ph. D. directly and such candidates need not submit thesis.

6. How quick is the process of acceptance of publication?

Majority of the Indian Journals and some international journals are very slow, the process of acceptance and publication is very lengthy. This is not suitable for your time bound programme. Hence, it is meaningless to submit paper to such journals, if process is not quick.

7. Is it open access?

Many journals ask for charges to make your article open access. If it is open access without any charges then your article can be accessed by many researchers. Majority of the Indian journals are open access without charges. Currently, impact factor of some of the Indian open access journals is increasing [8, 14].

8. Are there publication charges?

This point is very important, especially for researchers from developing countries as charges may not be affordable. Most professional/business minded journals from India and abroad charge fee for publication. The fee is in the form of currency of respective country.

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