

Change at the Helm

Ophthalmological Society of Pakistan was founded on the 19th December 1957 at the King Edward Medical College. In its meeting on the 16th November 1968 the society resolved that it should have a publication of its own publication in the tradition of American Academy of Ophthalmology. While Raja Mumtaz was appointed as the first Editor, there was little expertise in publication of a scientific journal in Pakistan at the time. The task of publication was therefore taken up by international member, an expatriate Pakistani, living in the USA, Dr. Khalid J Awan. He carried out this task admirably well for a period of eight years from 1985 to 1993.

However by 1992 the society felt strong enough to start publication from Pakistan. The task of publication was then entrusted to Prof Muhammad Lateef Ch. The first publication from Pakistan came in January 1993. He carried on with the task as Chief Editor until he took over as the President of the OSP center. For the next few years Prof Jahangir Durrani was the Chief Editor of the PJO until he abruptly immigrated to the USA. The Chief Editorship of the PJO was then returned to Prof Lateef Ch. with Dr. Tahir Mahmood, as editor, as his understudy.

In the beginning of 2011 Prof Lateef Ch. announced his plans of retirement from the post of Chief Editor of PJO and the search for a new chief Editor was started. The applicants for the post made a presentation to the Central council in Nathiagali and the new Chief Editor was announced during the Lahore Ophthalmology.

So much for the history. The PJO has been in continuous publication since its inception. That is no mean achievement. For most of that period there was no institutional support for the journal. The financial support was also limited. Often the publication of the journal was assisted from the Chief Editor's own resources. Most journals in Pakistan publish no more than 200 to 300 copies. PJO is published in the quantity of 1300 copies ever quarter. PJO is sent to all members of the Ophthalmic society by Mail or courier. The PMDC and the WHO recognize the journal. Its recognition by the HEC is in progress.

The team led by Prof Lateef Ch. started off being IT illiterate. However the PJO now has its own

website, is open access, has an archive and a search engine for the archive. You can log on to the website and look for previous issues or search them by author or title or subject. It speaks volumes for the leadership qualities and the commitment of Prof Lateef Ch. that he was able to bring together a team, which achieved all this. A team that often had strong dissenting voices.

This is the last issue being published under the Chief Editorship of Professor Lateef Ch. The task before the next Chief Editor and his team is just as hard. They have to maintain what they have and increase the impact factor of the journal. The final challenge before the new Chief Editor and his team is indexation with Medline.

On the plus side they now have solid institutional support. PJO has an office and support staff. There are many more doctors in Pakistan who have experience in scientific publication. On the negative side the culture of research does not exist in the country. For any diehard researcher the obstacles are hamalyian. The funds do not exist; very few people know the meaning of p value or the relevance of sample size. Once a diligent researcher has gone past all these hurdles he or she soon finds that patients do not maintain follow-up. Most researchers have poor skill at writing in English.

While the hurdles are many the task is not insurmountable. A committed team can push the whole of Ophthalmology forward. The authors can be cajoled, guided, helped and prodded into writing a better paper and correcting their English. While indexation in Medline may appear distant, indexation in other regional and international indices can be achieved in not too distant future.

The central council of the OSP has given the new Chief Editor and his team four years to achieve a minimum editorial standard. The PJO has become the standard bearer of the Ophthalmic community of Pakistan, it cannot let the Ophthalmic community down. The new team will have to show that they are worthy of stepping into the shoes of their illustrious predecessor and carrying this standard forward.

Syed Ali Haider
Chief Editor (Elect)