

Invited Lecture

Improving International Collaboration Among Medical Editors of EMR: Gratifying Results From Some Personal Initiatives

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One of the objectives of the Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors (EMAME) founded in 2003 at the First Medical Journals Conference at Cairo was to promote cooperation and communication between editors of medical journals in the region and throughout the world besides promoting continuing education for editors of medical journals with regular conferences and courses. However, while we have had not much success as regards the first objective, holding of EMAME conferences every two years on regular basis did provide an opportunity to the medical editors in the EMR to share their knowledge and experience to some extent.

Although no organized programme for increasing collaboration among the medical editors of the region could be worked out so far for various reasons, some personal initiative taken by the author has given some gratifying results. It not only proved to be a great learning experience but also helped improve one's vision and understanding of the problems faced by other colleagues editing peer reviewed medical journals. For such a personal initiative to be successful, there are some pre requisites i.e. one must be a keen learner, must believe in Continuous Professional Development which is extremely essential these days for every profession medical editors being no exception. In addition expenditures incurred should not be considered an expense but an investment in one's education and training.

This presentation highlighted how the author took personal initiative to contact some of the medical editors and faculty members of various universities of medical sciences in Islamic Republic of Iran during the last four years. As a result, it provided an opportunity to visit various institutions i.e. Ahwaz University of Medical Sciences, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Shaheed Beheshti University

of Medical Sciences, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences and Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. After establishing initial contact details of the visit were worked out whereby the administration of these universities provided the local hospitality in most of the cases and I was welcomed as a guest of the university. The programme included conducting workshops on Medical Writing, Medical Editing, and Peer Review for the faculty members and postgraduates. At Isfahan University of Medical Sciences even a session with medical students was also organized. Meetings with the Editors of various medical journals published by these universities and the Vice Chancellors of Research in these institutions were highly informative. The success of this initiative can be judged from the fact that almost all the universities visited so far expressed their desire and willingness for this continued cooperation and collaboration.

For the author these interactive sessions were much more rewarding since we were able to identify twenty seven potential reviewers from these institutions. Not only that three eminent research scientists from Iran accepted our invitation to be our International Advisors while another three faculty members from various medical universities were invited to join the Editorial Board. Their constant help, assistance and guidance have helped to improve the journal to a great extent while this initiative also increased the submissions from Islamic Republic of Iran manifold during these years for Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences. (Table-1)

During these visits some authors were also provided help and assistance in reviewing and editing their manuscripts so as to improve their chances of acceptance for publication. This shows that even on personal initiative ways and means can be worked out to further enhance such collaboration with medical editors in other countries in the EMR through short exchange programmes with mutual consent and cooperation.

Table-1 Manuscript Received from Iran and Published during 2004 to 2010 in Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences

<i>Year</i>	<i>Manuscripts received</i>	<i>Manuscripts published</i>
2004	21	32*
2005	74	17
2006	90	38
2007	149	89
2008	169	83
2009	170	72
2010	262	64

* Includes manuscripts received during 2002 and 2003 as well