

## Chapter-22

### How to write an Editorial

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A Good Editorial is considered to be an opinion maker. It usually analyzes the evidence and become the base to produce new evidence. It is more like analysis of results in a study followed by discussion. An Editorial must express opinion, critically analyze after looking at various perspectives on an issue but it is essential that it retains balance. Most often the writer of an Editorial comments on some recent issue and attempts to formulate view point based after an objective detailed analysis. Apart from being opinion maker, a Good Editorial is reconciliatory between different viewpoints. It must be remembered that an editorial is not only a literary piece but it must express a firm and balanced opinion. A Good Editorial should also be careful to leave a good after taste, must be sufficiently brief to hold attention of the readers and entertaining at the same time. The reader should feel enlightened after reading an Editorial and help them to form their own opinion on a particular issue under discussion.<sup>1</sup>

An editorial is usually written by the Editor or any member of the editorial board of the journal. Most often an important topic of current interest is selected and then the whole present situation, current scenario is critically discussed and analyzed. This is followed by summarizing the current situation which is followed by some suggestions and recommendations to the concerned authorities so that some action could be taken, measures initiated to improve the situation.

### **Examples:**

1. The issue of diabetic foot ulcer was taken up and the miserable plight of the patients suffering from diabetic foot ulcers was discussed. This was followed by reviewing the current international scenario how the diabetic foot ulcers were managed in the developed countries in the light of the recommendations of International Working Group of Diabetic Foot (IWGDF). This led to the establishment of first Diabetic Foot Clinic in Pakistan followed by numerous other diabetic foot clinics, education and training in diabetic foot which eventually has reduced the amputations due to diabetic foot ulcers in Pakistan tremendously.<sup>2</sup>
2. The role of regulatory agencies in Pakistan like Pakistan Medical & Dental Council and Higher Education Commission, as regards improvement of quality and standard of biomedical journals has remained under discussion for quite some time. This issue was taken up and these agencies were reminded of their duties and responsibilities, how similar bodies in neighboring country like Iran has contributed to the improvement of biomedical journals published from Iran was highlighted. It was followed by a set of suggestions as to what measures these agencies need to undertake to ensure that the number of biomedical journals published from Pakistan included in international databases like PubMed, PubMed Central and Web of Sciences, Science Citation Index Expanded known for its Impact Factor can increase.<sup>3</sup>
3. In another case study undertaken by International Committee of Red Cross on increasing violence against healthcare professionals, healthcare facilities and preventive strategies was taken up and their study findings were highlighted again in an Editorial supplemented with some suggestions.<sup>4</sup>
4. For the last few years, telemedicine has become quite popular. It has its advantages and disadvantages. Its use and future in dermatology was highlighted in an Editorial published in Journal of Pakistan Association of Dermatologists.<sup>5</sup>

Sometime the journal publishes a study which is accompanied with a related Editorial to further emphasize the importance of the study. The suggestions thus made are also quite important which can help the concerned agencies, institutions to take appropriate measures.

Some time ago we received a study from Peoples Republic of China entitled “How to overcome violence against healthcare professionals, reduce medical disputes and ensure patient safety.”<sup>6</sup> It made very interesting observations and pinpointed the reasons for increasing violence against healthcare professionals in China and also suggested some remedial measures. The situation was quite similar which is seen in many countries including Pakistan which due to commercialization of health services are witnessing increasing violence against healthcare professionals as well as healthcare facilities. This issue was taken up and an accompanying editorial in the same issue in which the above manuscript was included was published.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Guest Editorials***

Sometimes either the Editor invites some eminent medical personalities, professional experts to write an Editorial on a particular subject or some professionals can submit a communication to the journal editorial team to be considered for publication as an Editorial. If accepted for publication, they are known as Guest Editorials.

### ***Examples:***

Here are a few examples of Guest Editorials published on different topics in various biomedical journals in Pakistan and overseas which were contributed either by us or they were contributed by some healthcare professionals and we received them for publication. They were accepted and published after editing.<sup>8-11</sup>

### ***Combined Editorial***

Sometimes a few editors of biomedical journals come together to discuss an important issue which is related and

important to all of them. They then write an editorial in which each one of them gives their input. Once this document is finalized, it is published simultaneously in all the journals to which they are affiliated at the same time. This is known as combined editorials.

**Example:**

The issue of data sharing statement for clinical trials is important. Recently some members of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) discussed this issue in detail and then came up with a joint editorial which was entitled “Data sharing statements for Clinical Trials- A requirement of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. This joint editorial which was authored by Darren B. Taichman and colleagues included sixteen distinguished editors of leading biomedical journals. This joint editorial was then published in all these journals.<sup>12</sup>

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