

EDITORIAL

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF THE ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL JOURNAL

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The Ethiopian Medical Journal (EMJ) has been in existence for over 50 years and has been the main avenue for sharing information generated by health professionals on health care in Ethiopia. Several other journals have since joined EMJ with a focus on the various sub-specialties of medicine (obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, surgery, public health, etc.). The quality of information disseminated through the EMJ has however been contentious.

The quality of a medical journal reflects the state of medical education and health research in a country. Ideally the content of a medical journal should assist in the formulation of appropriate health policies and interventions, and this will be expected to contribute to the betterment of the health of the people in the country. In this regard, the existence of trained health researchers plays an important role in generating, adapting and promoting the application of scientific knowledge.

Careful selection of what goes in EMJ is the responsibility of the editorial board. This process requires significant effort and input of several individuals and institutions. Articles submitted to the EMJ undergo a long and tedious process leading to acceptance, modification or rejection. The requirement is detailed in each of the issue of the journal as an appendix (an updated version since April 2016 is available). The most important is the process of peer-review undertaken by professionals who are knowledgeable in the subject. In many institutions around the world an internal vetting process is also practiced in which senior colleagues provide advice prior to sending a paper for publication to a journal. Indeed, some require internal institutional approval prior to submitting a paper to a journal. I believe that adopting such a practice will be beneficial to all. However care should be undertaken to ensure that such a practice does not discourage young researchers.

During the past few years less than 30% of articles submitted to EMJ were found acceptable. The majority of these articles belong to the category of descriptive studies. Precious few belonged to the category of analytic studies (observational and intervention). This is a reflection of inadequate research capacity prevailing in the country and a clarion call to seriously address the shortcomings primarily at health training and research institutions. Adequate financing of research remains a major challenge.

EMJ tries its best to contribute to research capacity building through the peer-review process in which authors are provided advice to improve acceptability of articles. However building research capacity is the primary responsibility of health training institutions. Building and cultivating a research culture in training institutions, initiated early and continued throughout the training period ought to be strengthened.

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