

Editor's errands and responsibilities to run a successful Medical Journal

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The pivotal role of scientific journals is to provide updated knowledge via distribution of new innovations and provision of future road map for research. Therefore, maintenance of quality standards for available data harbors great significance. This all becomes the jurisdiction of editors, who ensure preservation of all this on ethical grounds¹. The slogan of publish or perish has put a huge burden upon the shoulders of author and editor as well. It seems as if the responsibilities of editor are not so tiring but in reality it's the editor who backs up a good publication. The editor is the middle man between author and reviewers. Treating author with objectivity while maintain credibility of the journal is the crux of responsibilities of editor.

When considering the responsibilities, negotiating with nepotism is a major challenge for the journal editor. At the same time, it is compulsory to build a relationship with the authors as well as reviewers. Maintaining the integrity of blind review process is by the external evaluations of the journal. In Pakistan publications are essential for promotion so the editors are under pressure from the organizations also. They should be raising the bar of scientific investigation and medical writing in the larger benefit of the community of potential authors and readers. They must be creative in envisioning the future of the medicine. They receive a lot of research relating the patients; it is their duty to verify the data in best practice of the medicine keeping the integrity of this field apart from the business. Complete separation of editorial decisions from financial issues, is therefore essential for ensuring editor's independence. If it becomes known that an editor's judgment can be influenced by extraneous factors such as income from specific advertisements, the journal will lose the respect of its readers.

In view to run a successful medical journal, a dedicated team is a mandatory requirement. This includes editor in chief, co-chief editor, managing editor, associate editor, editorial and advisory board, editorial board members and guest editors for special issues. The errands are distributed amongst all these members in view to get the desired goals².

Editor in chief is the one performing fundamental role in all the proceedings. This starts by establishing the standard operating procedures (SOPs) to establish journal's standing and impact in scientific community based upon ethics and competence. The selection of editorial board and reviewers' board also comes under his domain. The decisions regarding acceptance or rejection of manuscripts, promotion of journals at pertinent conferences, organizing special issues, contribution of editorials and scientific articles, all are amongst his foremost responsibilities. Editing of all accepted manuscripts, management of finances and timely publication of issues are under his sphere².

The co-chief editor works as a senior editor, who performs a task to assist chief editor by sharing his responsibilities. In situations like absenteeism of chief editor, he is at liberty to take verdicts on his behalf for smooth running of journal's proceedings. He also provides assistance for the formulation of policies and selection of editorial board. Besides this he is a focal person to liaison amongst the managing and associate editors for the selection of content and organization of a special issue. Like chief editor, he can also contribute editorials and scientific manuscripts for the journal².

The managing editor works to coordinate the peer review process. He/she works to streamline the submitted manuscripts for editorial and peer review along with dexterity of authors, and their technical editing for all issues. Ensuring incorporation of all suggested changes in peer review process also comes under his domain. The associate editor is usually tasked to select appropriate reviewers for the manuscript. He/ she also ensure completion of peer review process in specific time line, along with methodical evaluation of review reports, based upon which, manuscript acceptance or rejection decision can be done. The editorial and advisory board are directed to establish policies for ethical practices. In view to improve journal's standing in scientific community, on yearly basis they are directed to contribute a manuscript².

The provision of feedback on past issues comes under the job description of editorial board members. They also facilitate the editors for establishment of reviewer's bank, selection of conferences, validate journal to authors, readers and subscribers. The guest editors for special issues assist compilation of authors list and title of their papers. He also works to expedite review process for special issues². The responsibilities range from the author to reviewers and finally the reader. The Editor should have concept of publication criteria to be fulfilled by the author. Approval of research by the respective ethical board is a must to be checked by the editor. Same is true for the funding resources and conflict of interest. Peer review by external referees with the proper expertise is the most common method to ensure manuscript quality. The main role of editor comes into play when an article has to be rejected. Reasons for this practice are usually that the manuscript is outside the scope of the journal, does not meet the journal's quality standards or is of limited scientific merit, or lacks originality or novel information. But this costs the editor a lot of defame and makes author reluctant to send their publications in that journal. This might cost the journal financial losses but again this is important for marinating the credibility of journal.

A published report for the year 2017 identified 14 core competencies for the editors of scientific journals. The editor should be knowledgeable and skillful. In case required he should be able to analyze situation to seek guidance from colleagues of relevant field or organizations. The experience of research, decision making ability, judgmental approach to synthesize information in rapid manner comes amongst the necessities. The identification of learning goals and continuing education by joining professional societies will be

a milestone to improve quality standard of manuscripts and hence the journal as well. The good communication and computer skills to communicate effectively with authors, reviewers, editorial team and helping the staff members. On required basis be able to mentor and educate the staff in view of their feedback. A problem-solving ability, leadership qualities along with ethical practices by maintaining confidentiality and dealing on merit basis with all concerned persons. Regular monitoring and audit of journal's performance also comes in his domain³. Nutshell of the entire thing is that he should establish such SOPs which will promote application of best practices in field of research.

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