PMDC’s “New Initiative” for Journals

After taking an active stance for a couple of years regarding medical journals, the PMDC went into hibernation in August 2004. However, it woke up at last in October 2007 and made its presence felt by issuing advertisements in national newspapers asking for submission of updated information about the journals for renewal of recognition. This was taken as a welcome sign by all those who are lovers of research and believe in publication of quality scientific work.

As a follow-up, a meeting of the editors of the various journals was called on 23rd November, 2007 to discuss the problems facing them and to get their opinion about various issues. Inspite the fact that this journal submitted the required information promptly, no invitation was received. We came to know about it through an editor colleague and participated. However, the short notice of the meeting and the way the meeting was organized and notified leaves a lot to be desired. The time notified for the meeting was in the morning, hence editors from places like Karachi came either the evening before or took the early morning flight, to be disappointed to find that the meeting was at 3pm. This waste of precious time though was compensated by the generous and reconciliatory attitude of Prof. A. J. Khan who chaired the meeting and Dr. A. Nadeem Akbar, the Registrar.

As the meeting started at 3pm, hence there was not much time for discussion in detail. Still several issues were touched upon and useful dialogue took place amongst the editors and the Journal Committee of the PMDC. Several decisions took place which have now been notified by the PMDC in a letter after approval by the Council in its 110th meeting in February 2008. For unknown reasons we have yet to receive a copy of this letter; we again came to know about it through an editor colleague of ours. The important decisions that have been notified are:

1) Journals should be published atleast biannually for recognition by the Council.
2) Editorial Board should be headed by a medical/dental person.
3) Articles must be reviewed by atleast by two peers.
4) For maintenance of recognition all journals shall maintain a website with complete archives.
5) Subject Index and Author Index should be published annually and also available on website.
6) Journals will be reviewed every three years; new journals will be reviewed after four issues.
7) If the Journals Committee at any time feels that the performance of the journal has deteriorated, then the editor of the journal will be served a show cause notice and after giving full opportunity, the final decision about derecognition will be taken by the Council.
8) Every approved journal will be allotted a Registration No. on payment of prescribed fees (Journals have been asked to pay a sum of Rs.5000/- in the letter).
9) Undertaking should be taken from all authors that the article has not been submitted elsewhere; this should be available for inspection by PMDC on demand within two years.
10) Plagiarism shall be a punishable offence for the author.
11) Any author can publish only one article in an issue as 1st author and one article as co-author in an issue of a journal.

These decisions should be acclaimed, as they are a step in the right direction. However, it should be pointed out that in the meeting with the editors the registration fees was finalized as Rs.500/-, and that too after protest. Secondly some points were allocated for case reports and review articles after deliberations by the scribe and other editors which are not mentioned in the letter.

Lastly, we request the President and Registrar of PMDC, and the Chairman of the Journals’ Committee that the red tapism and bureaucratic attitude felt by most of us should be done away with. Inspite of reminding of our address several times, we failed to receive the invitation or the important circulars. Besides the copies of journals being sent are not acknowledged, and every now and then someone wakes up and asks for previous issues.

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