

Editing is a Happy Marriage, and Divorce is Not an Option!

Hamid Mehmood

¹Acting Editor, *Annals of PIMS*

²Ph.D. (Bio Chemistry) Spain, Ph.D. (Medical Education), Head & Professor of Bio Chemistry

Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University, Islamabad

Email: drhamidmehmood373@gmail.com

“A great editor is fundamental to a journal’s health and success”. First of all, I would like to present my tribute to leaving editor and the editorial board for providing great contribution to PIMS and SZABMU especially Prof. Dr. Tanwir Khaliq, Prof. Dr. Syeda Batool Mazhar, Prof. Rizwan Aziz Qazi, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Amjad Chaudhry, Dr. Ayesha Isani Majeed and Prof. Dr. Abid Zaheer Farooqi. However, every great editor has to eventually make way for their successor. The transition period between editors can be a complex process, involving contracts, systems, mentoring and above all, careful timing.

It’s never too early to start thinking about transition planning. It can take a year to manage the whole process - recruiting, appointing and handing over to a new editor - and the longer the lead-in time, the more organized the process can be. I am looking for new editors and editorial board from all medical disciplines to continue this great journal.

Editors are “word people.” Or perhaps were. Editors of academic journals now may rarely get their hands “worried” as they promote their journal’s strategic development, the flow of material, and happy relations among all parties. But what got me to my job was a love of words. Words drew me to this line of work. Ultimately, they are a joy.

Many new editors of professional journals think they should handle everything themselves because they know the journal best or they know what they think their journal should be. We, on the other hand, believe strongly in the value of having an editorial board for a variety of reasons that strengthen the journal and offer more diverse options. In fact, editing a journal is like any marriage: always a work in progress and a partnership that can work if both are willing to work at the relationship.

We are also well aware that neither of us can be familiar with the topics of every article submitted and call upon the expertise of the other or our research editor to help with methods presented in some articles. Finally, Like in any marriage, it is important to keep all lines of communication open and collaborate whenever possible.

Are there downsides to blind peer view editing? If the individuals in the marriage have power issues, fail to communicate as equals with a shared purpose, or have annoying habits or tendencies – say, one is a procrastinator and the other is a very strict observer of timelines for handling reviews– trouble can arise.

So, yes, our marriage of convenience works well for us. We lean on each other for support when needed and seek our editorial partner’s wisdom when in doubt. We discuss new members for our fine Editorial cohort when vacancies arise, and when one of us is overloaded or unable to meet a deadline, the other picks up the slack. For us, editing and peer view is a happy marriage, and divorce is not an option!

As an editor, I have frequently come across cases where many authors botch on this important attribute. The universal belief that we cite references to protect ourselves from plagiarism is not wholly right. Suitable citation of references is important not only to acknowledge the role of other published research on the author’s work but also to establish a verifiable context for the new idea. Providing relevant references in the paper will also inform the reader about ideas that back the new proposal and those that highlight the limitations of the previous work.

Before I make my editorial decision on a paper submitted to my journal, I always bear in my mind that accurate

referencing is as vital as the idea that the author is espousing.

Balancing Journal Management and Leadership

It goes without saying that editing a journal is time-consuming. The obvious demands include reading manuscripts and reviewer comments, drafting thoughtful, instructive feedback, communicating with authors, reviewers, the publisher, and other stakeholders, and marketing the journal to grow its readership and editorial support. The demands on modern editors also include maintaining the usability of online editorial portals, integrating emerging modes of scholarly dissemination (e.g., open access, online first publication, digital appendices, etc.), fraud detection in the editorial process, and absorbing the perspectives and needs of contributors from institutions all over the world. These are the mechanics of managing the extent organization, with success measured by such crystalline metrics as impact factor, subscriptions, and stakeholder satisfaction.

The Role of Reviewers

After authors, reviewers are the lifeblood of any journal. Peer review requires independent scrutiny by suitable experts and it is this, in particular, that academic journals offer in terms of “value added.” And reviewers do this without reward. The

review process is generally the slowest part of the publication process and can leave an editor particularly frustrated for many reasons:

Last but not least: taking on these diverse roles, to me, is the main attraction of being an editor. Continuous change has to be welcomed and embraced and the outcomes then fed back into the journal’s strategic direction and management. In many ways, the academic journal is at a key stage in its history where it has to place itself in a world of social media, open access, and digital technologies. The roles I have outlined above all contribute to achieving this.

I welcome all the new Editors and Editorial Board members, reviewers on their new assignments.

**May ALLAH bless us and to make our way to come out
with flying colors.**