

# Dental publications at the Saudi Medical Journal

## *Where do we stand 2009–2016*

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As we approach our 37th year of continuous publication, we are proud of the continued progress of the Saudi Medical Journal (SMJ). Since it was first launched in 1979, SMJ has aimed to provide a platform for researchers to publish their articles, and embraced the responsibility of being a leader in biomedical publication in the Gulf and Middle Eastern Region. It has been, and will continue to be a symbol of national pride and an important medium for the publication and dissemination of medical knowledge. Despite a succession in editorial leadership, a desire for improvement, and keeping up with rapid developments in the field of medical publishing has been the main objective of the Strategic Plan of the Editors-In-Chief who have led the journal in achieving and surpassing the aspirations of senior management. The Editorial team always strives for quality, and has exerted great efforts in improving and developing the journal.

To help achieve the objective of widening the journals scope, the editorial team opened its doors to the inclusion of dental speciality publications in 2009. This broadening of its horizons was the result of a strong belief in the necessity of integrating medical and dental knowledge. The journal recruited 2 dental consultants to join the editorial team, and authors were invited to submit manuscripts reporting original research, reviews, and case reports in the prescribed format of the journal.

After 7 years of continuous dental publication in SMJ, we are introducing a summary of what has been published so far.

A total of 89 dental articles from different dental specialties were published in SMJ between 2009 and 2015 (Figure 1); 70% of these were original articles, and 62% of the published articles originated from Saudi Arabia (Figure 2).

As shown in Figure 3 (the ratio of medical to dental publications over the last 7 years), although we have received a large number of dental submissions, a relatively small number of papers have been published. The high rejection rate is attributed to the goals of the editorial leadership of maintaining a balance of specialties, and the general scope of the journal. We are always challenged to select topics that are of high scientific value, but yet of general interest to the journal's audience. The journal publishes original research work that contributes significantly to furthering scientific knowledge in the various fields of biomedical and dental science.

The reasons for manuscript rejection include highly specialized studies that are beyond the general scope of the journal, lower quality content not meeting the requirements of the journal, authors failing to submit revisions and other necessary requirements, and duplicate publication.

As editors, one of the main problems we face is the poor quality of articles submitted, and the low frequency of standard articles. The majority of articles are poorly written, with no, or inappropriate study designs, a lack of relevant statistics, and poor reference citations.

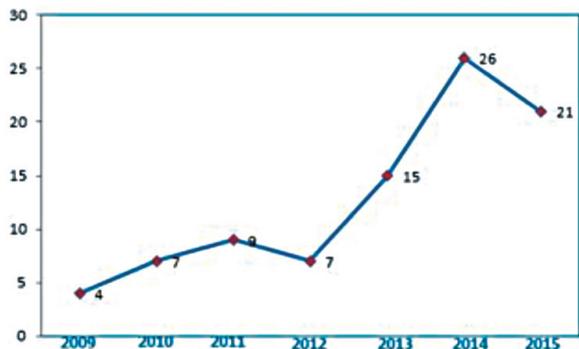
Most of the dental authors in Saudi Arabia are not full time researchers, and many write articles for the sake of departmental promotion, especially at the academic institutions, or to fulfill a requirement of their postgraduate training. There is a lack of proper training for authors in the art of medical writing, and authors usually fail to comply with the specific instructions to authors of the target journal.

The publication lag (time between acceptance and publication of a manuscript) of journals may lead to unrest among authors who require urgent publications.

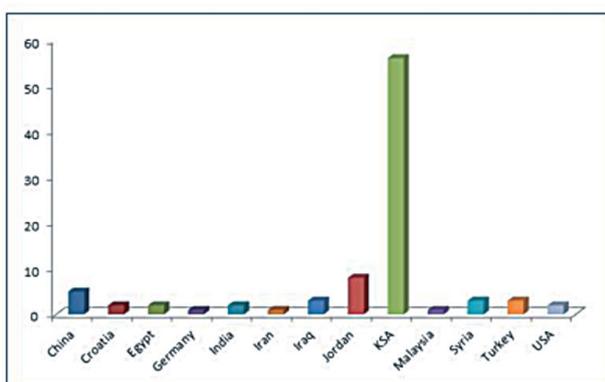
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**Figure 1** - Number of dental specialty papers published per year in the Saudi Medical Journal between 2009 and 2015.



**Figure 2** - Country of origin of dental specialty papers published in the Saudi Medical Journal between 2009 and 2015



**Figure 3** - Percentage of published dental papers from the total number of papers published per year in the Saudi Medical Journal between 2009 and 2015.

This can result in an increase in the rate of duplicate publication or salami slicing, a major headache for editors. The issues of falsification of reports, fabrication of the results, and plagiarism are, unfortunately, not uncommon in Saudi Arabia, and despite the signing of declarations during the initial submission, a requirement of SMJ, a number of authors have been involved in such types of academic dishonesty.

Another challenge for editors at SMJ is searching for, and selecting appropriate and expert peer reviewers. It is often difficult to find reviewers in the various dental specialties. Many reviewers do not follow the requested time schedule, and need repeated reminders before returning the manuscript. This is a difficult situation to manage, as the reviewers are providing their reviews on a voluntary basis.

In an attempt to enhance the level of scientific dental publications, the journal actively invites well-known authors in their field to submit high quality, comprehensive dental reviews.

Additionally, the editorial staff regularly participates in international dental conferences that are held annually in Riyadh to meet, interact with, and attract potential readers, authors, and reviewers. To increase awareness of the importance of publications in medical practice, the journal has hosted scientific events on biomedical journalism and publication practice with invited distinguished international experts.

From my prospective, I would say that dental publication at SMJ still requires extensive work to improve the level of quality of the scientific materials contributing to the advancement of medical and dental knowledge. Therefore, we encourage all dental researchers to address novel clinical topics of both local and global interest for consideration by SMJ, and to avoid the wasting of precious time, resources, and efforts on the duplication of previously published work.

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In 2016, we will be working hard to enhance and improve our online submission and publishing system to a more user-friendly web-based experience. This system includes peer-review, editing, publication, and content management, and facilitates the global indexing of journal content. The launching of this upgraded system in the coming months will be beneficial to authors, reviewers, readers, researchers, and the journal's editorial staff.

Through our role as editors at SMJ, we aim to facilitate and provide high quality content that contributes to the international literature and is useful for all readers. In this context, we would like to direct our thanks and appreciation to our authors, readers, reviewers, board members and our highly dedicated editorial staff. We wish everyone continued progress and publication success in the coming years.

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No response from the authors to all journal communication after review and acceptance is also considered unethical withdrawal. Withdrawn manuscripts noted to have already been submitted or published in another journal will be subjected to sanctions in accordance with the journal policy. The journal will take disciplinary measures for unacceptable withdrawal of manuscripts. An embargo of 5 years will be enforced for the author and their co-authors, and their institute will be notified of this action.