

# Saudi Medical Journal

## 2001, another year of success

*Saleh M. Al-Deeb, MD, FRCP, Basim A. Yaqub, MD, FRCP.*



Since undertaking the task of Editors for the Saudi Medical Journal, we have always believed in progressive evolution as the right way for management. Unfortunately, the evolution which has occurred in the media is becoming so advanced that it has exceeded what used to be called "revolution". Saudi Medical Journal has been progressing well since the start of the new millennium, and many new developments have been implemented.

**Indexing.** Before we made an attempt to index Saudi Medical Journal, we looked thoroughly at its handicaps including, regular publication, quality of articles, speed of manuscript processing, critical reviewing, editorial board, instructions to authors, quality of tables and figures and many other items. We also carried out an extensive search on many successful Journals to compare our data with theirs. The Editorial Office had a critical meeting and decided that if we are to be successful in indexing Saudi Medical Journal, we have to correct our handicaps one by one and make the Journal a medium of excellence. A set of objections was outlined and the methods of implementing them established. A task was assigned to every member of the Editorial Office and this resulted in a highly successful outcome, namely the indexing of Saudi Medical Journal as Saudi Med J from January 2000. As of this time, all abstracts of the manuscripts published from January 2000 are now available both in Medline and Pubmed. However, we do not stop there, our ongoing aims and objectives are still to produce a Journal with an internationally high impact factor.

**Saudi MedBase.** As a leading Journal in the Kingdom and the surrounding area, we thought it our responsibility to preserve all the medical literature published in the Saudi Journals since the first Journal was published in 1979. This project has been carried out in 2 stages. Stage 1 in which we preserved all the literature up to 1995, followed by stage 2, which will be published early this year and will preserve all the literature published from 1979 to December 1999. This will include a search facility including the Institute, the authors, the titles, the key words and others. All the Journals published in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be included in this archiving.

**Website.** As electronic media is progressing very fast, Saudi Med J has developed a website entitled [www.smj.org.sa](http://www.smj.org.sa). This website has many features, which allows the reader to view whole Journal articles and the abstracts available along with future Table of Contents for upcoming issues. It also includes many other features on the history of the Journal

and an advanced search engine in which any article or abstract can be printed. The website will be updated regularly to match the caliber of websites from other leading journals. All the articles and the abstracts published from January 2000 will be available on this website, and it will also serve to preserve all the literature not found in the Saudi MedBase.

**Annual Report.** This year we received 401 manuscripts, an increase of 6% compared with the previous year. The total turnover time for a manuscript this year was 4.7 months, (compared to 6.4 in 2001, and 9.1 in 1999) this is a great achievement with a cut of total turnover time by 48% in the last 2 years. As the Journal is now indexed, we are receiving increasing numbers of articles, and it is proving very difficult to publish all of these. So, we need to take one or more of the following decisions. 1. To increase the rejection rate, which we will start applying this year. Previously, we used Saudi Med J as a teaching media for our authors and we never rejected a manuscript which conveyed an important message, even if this meant preparing more than one proof with the author to improve the article. This involved additional work by the Editing Department and unfortunately, this may now have to change. 2. From this issue the readers will note that there is an increase in the size of each issue by not less than 25% to accommodate more articles and may result eventually in increasing the number of pages published by Saudi Med J at the end of this year. The 3rd and last decision is to increase the number of issues per year to 24 or more. However, this is not a decision that will be taken quickly, and will not be considered for another 2 years. This year we have made minimum changes to the Editorial Board, however we would like to extend our thanks to Dr. Francesco Marotta, whose invaluable term of service on the Editorial Board has come to an end. In the years ahead we will see more and more changes in the Editorial Board to enable us to adapt to the increasing role of the Board members.

**The Future.** This year the authors and subscribers will note the new cover which has been long awaited and we hope will reflect the progressive nature of Saudi Med J. Also, the readers will see that after the Table of Contents we have included highlights of some of the articles published, this will serve as a quick scan of the articles included and we hope these changes will be welcomed by our readers.

The role of an editor of a successful Journal is very difficult to define, but if one word summarizes this, it would be “trust”, the trust of the authors, the reviewers and the readers. There are a number of less than glamorous tasks, which an Editor must undertake for a successful Journal: “Begging” - begging the printers, the authors, the reviewers, and others to keep to deadlines. “Soliciting” – soliciting the subscribers and the readers to submit high quality articles to the Journal, and “stealing” – not to steal other Journal articles or ideas, but to steal other Journal readers by making Saudi Med J more competitive. However, we have to think of the future, and in the future we have to see medical publishers who are prepared to take some of these burdens from the editors. This may take time but it is the only way forward.

