

A year of challenges and opportunities

In July 2012, Saudi Medical Journal (Saudi Med J) had its 33rd anniversary. Each year we plan to move forward with our progress as a leading general medical journal in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. We had a promising start in 2012 when the journal commissioned a training course for medical editors in collaboration with PSP Consultancy¹ with the objectives of strengthening the competencies of the editors and staff, re-evaluating the publishing policies of the journal, acquiring information on the current developments in the publishing industry, and improving the standard of professional processing and editing of manuscripts. We aim to improve the peer-review quality and avoid bias, so we started to adopt a double-blind review where the identity of the author is not revealed to the reviewer, and vice versa. More effort is being undertaken in the processing of the manuscript to evaluate the methodology and ensure that statistical tests and data interpretation are appropriate before a manuscript is accepted. This was made possible with the assistance of Dr. Adel Boktor (Professor in Community Medicine) who recently joined the journal to reinforce the quality of the manuscript.

Another propelled change this year, the journal joined the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) to promote and follow the highest standard of publication ethics.²

Recently, the website security became vulnerable to malware infections. This security breach compromised the functionality of the website and its contents consequential to incorrect spelling of author's name, unavailability of the html files, and disruption of workflow. These environmental crises are widely perceived in publishing. As the lifespan of technological advancement is too short, journals like us should reinvest in current systems so as to sustain their relevance. For this reason, the journal is working on system developmental projects aimed at improving the security and functionality of our web applications. We are currently using the Online Journal Systems (OJS), which is a journal management and publishing system developed by the Public Knowledge Project.³

Annual statistics. This year, we received 1056 articles from different categories: 58 Review Articles, 746 Original Articles, 184 Case Reports, 27 Brief Communications, and 25 Correspondence (Figure 1). Of these, we published 13 Review Articles, 132 Originals Articles, 24 Case Reports, 21 Brief Communications, and 24 Correspondence (Table 1). We have a high rejection rate of 80% as it includes articles with low scientific evidence, manuscripts not fulfilling the scope of the journal, authors failing to resubmit the revised

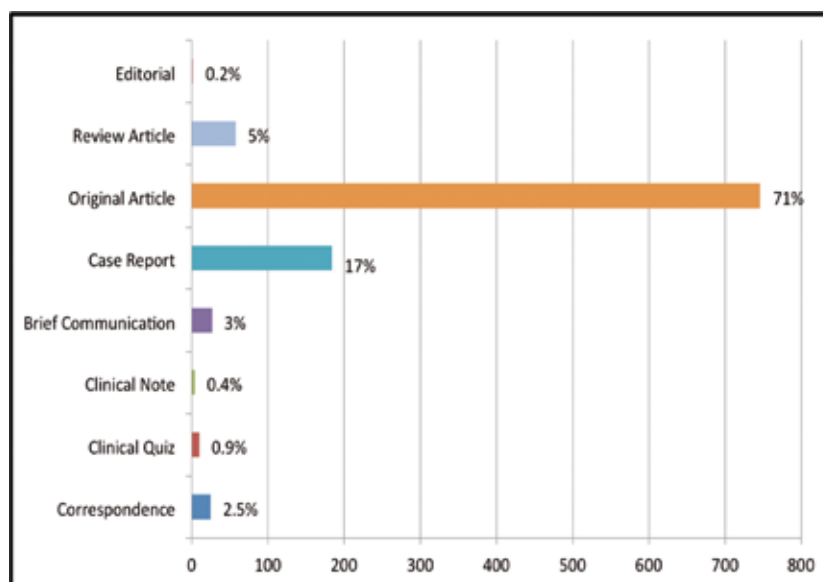


Figure 1 - Manuscripts received for the year 2012.

manuscript by a given deadline, and those missing necessary requirements for publication.

One of the key indicators for measuring success is the time to publication. We pride ourselves for maintaining an average of 4.7 months from receipt to publication considering the statistical review we apply to most articles. However, we do recognize that the difficulty lies in the response of external reviewers prolonging the decision process that is strictly time dependent. On the other hand, we are also determined to accelerate the processing time from received to acceptance.

Due to space limitations and high selection of

Table 1 - Articles published in Saudi Medical Journal for the year 2012.

Type of articles	n	(%)
Editorial	2	(0.9)
Leading Article	1	(0.4)
Review articles	13	(5.8)
Original articles	132	(58.4)
Case reports	24	(10.6)
Clinical notes	3	(1.3)
Clinical quiz	6	(2.7)
Brief communication	21	(9.3)
Correspondence	24	(10.6)
Total	226	(100.0)

Table 2 - Origin of "peer-reviewed" articles published in Saudi Medical Journal for the year 2012.

Origin	n	(%)
<i>Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</i>	120	(53.1)
<i>Gulf Countries</i>		(0.0)
Kuwait	1	(0.4)
Oman	1	(0.4)
Qatar	2	(0.9)
United Arab Emirates	4	(1.8)
<i>Arab Countries/Eastern Mediterranean Region</i>		(0.0)
Egypt	7	(3.1)
Iraq	18	(8.0)
Iran	7	(3.1)
Jordan	1	(0.4)
Libya	1	(0.4)
Nigeria	1	(0.4)
Syria	1	(0.4)
<i>Others</i>		(0.0)
Albania	1	(0.4)
Bosnia	1	(0.4)
Canada	3	(1.3)
China	21	(9.3)
Croatia	1	(0.4)
India	4	(1.8)
Italy	1	(0.4)
Korea	1	(0.4)
Malaysia	3	(1.3)
Poland	1	(0.4)
Turkey	22	(9.7)
United Kingdom	2	(0.9)
United States of America	1	(0.4)
Total	226	(100.0)

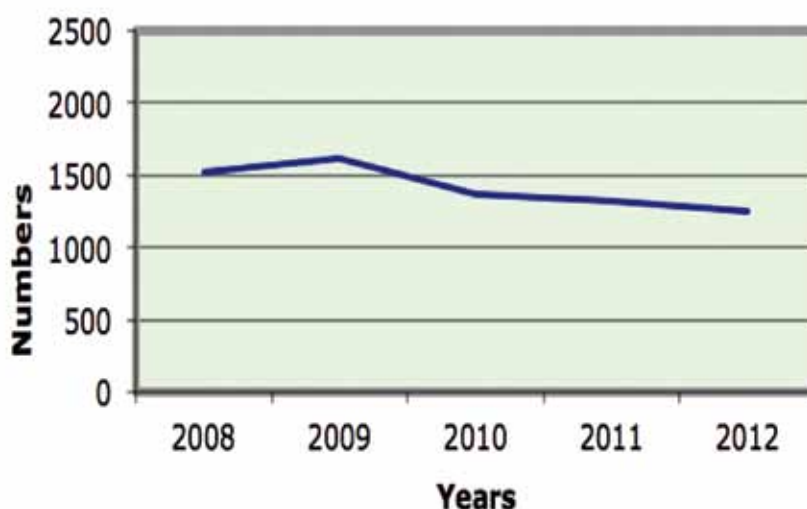


Figure 2 - Number of pages printed in the years 2008-2012.

articles, the number of manuscripts published has decreased gradually over the last 5 years (Figure 2)

Country of origin. Saudi Medical Journal has always been dedicated to giving a chance to good papers from all over the world. Table 2 summarizes the origin of “peer-reviewed” articles published in 2012.

There have been historical changes in the Editorial Team over the past few months. We were deeply saddened by the loss of our Patron HRH Prince Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz. His successor HRH Prince Salman bin Abdul-Aziz will continue his legacy, and is known for his support of research and publication. It is also with a heavy heart that we bid farewell to our long time Editorial Director Major General Dr Ketab E. Al-Obati who has recently retired. During his term, he has provided numerous opportunities for the journal to grow and improve over the years. We are grateful for his steadfast support. On a positive note, we would like to welcome Major General Dr. Saeed M. Al-Asmary who will take over the new role of Editorial Director. Also in 2012, Dr. Saud Al-Omani completed his term as Editor-in-Chief and we thank him for his hard work and dedicated service during this time. We bid a fond farewell and good wishes to our Editorial Manager Joyce Figuerres. She has left big shoes to fill, and she will be greatly missed.

We would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our staff, reviewers, and board members especially those who have completed their term: Dr. Mohammed Abomelha and Dr. Mohammed Al-Rukban. We would especially like to welcome and thank Pippa Smart for accepting our invitation to join our Editorial Board. These individuals made significant roles in realizing the Journal’s mission and vision. It is in our plans/objectives to resolve the issues with infrastructure and manpower.

With high hopes, the journal expects further operational improvements for efficiency and sustainable growth.

References

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