Saudi Medical Journal Message

We embark on a new year, it is important to reflect on the progress we have made and the challenges that lie ahead. In this editorial, We aim to go over the impact factor (IF) and new policies before shedding light on the journal statistics.

After more than 3 years, the World Health Organization has declared an end to the COVID-19 as a global health emergency.[1] It seemed like yesterday when COVID-19 has changed our lives and we suddenly adapt to the new normal.

Never before have research and healthcare systems gained the importance and priority they have now. One of our main roles is addressing global health issues. Over the years we have published COVID-19 related articles and this year the submissions on COVID-19 articles were not as ruling as with the previous years. It comprised 10% of our publication. The challenges that we face with these articles is the reproducibility. We do encourage novel contributions from other parts of the globe. The other challenge is the substantial amount of low-scientific relevance submissions; in addition to inadequate reviews or a lack of enthusiasm on the part of reviewers to offer an in-depth review, the editor has the last say in matters of opinion.

This year it also has come to our attention that some predatory site/journal is using our name and logo for publishing purposes. We would like to warn our readers and authors to use only the official links and website for the submissions. We are not connected with these agencies and do not take part in any of thier activities, and transactions that they do using our name.

We are working on expanding the use of the social media for dissemination of scientific information, we always advise the author to contribute in this process.
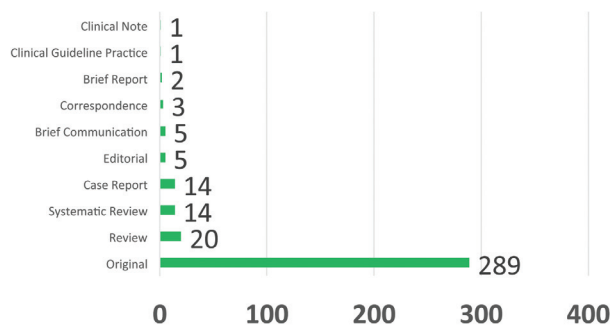
Halfway through this year the Journal's latest IF was released, it rose to 1.6 which is higher than the previous year's (1.422) although IF importance may diminish over time as new metrics are developed, but still IF remains an important metric for evaluating journals. Despite everything that we have encountered this year, we consider this to be great news. It is encouraging that we are adhering to our goal of releasing high-impact and quality articles. Moving forward, we believe this task will be more achievable with the addition of our 2 new associate editors who will assist and review various prior-to-print editing processes. We are delighted to welcome on board Dr. Saad Albtal from the Department of Family Medicine, Prince Sultan Military Medical City, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Dr. Haifa from the Scientific Research Center, Ministry of Health Defense Health Services, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Surely they will be a great addition to our team.

Once again we would like to bring light to some Journal's policies for the benefit of our readers most especially our authors. We have announced last year, that the journal does not consider papers that were previously submitted to preprint repositories, although this is a requirment by many journals, we at Saudi Medical Journal find it confusing, inconvenient, and time consuming when screening for unethical previously published (duplicated) articles.

Table 1 - Origin of "peer-reviewed" articles published in the Saudi Medical Journal for the year 2023.

Origin	Total	(%)
KSA	102	(74.5)
UAE	3	(2.2)
Qatar	1	(0.7)
Bahrain	1	(0.7)
Jordan	3	(2.2)
Turkey	16	(11.7)
UK	2	(1.5)
Mexico	1	(0.7)
Malaysia	2	(1.5)
Pakistan	1	(0.7)
China	22	(16.1)
Bahrain	1	(0.7)
Korea	1	(0.7)
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	(0.7)
Indonesia	1	(0.7)
India	1	(0.7)
Total	159	100

Figure 1 - Type of manuscripts received for the year 2023.

Table 2 - Average processing time frame of articles published in the Saudi Medical Journal for the year 2023.

Year	Received to Acceptance (Months)	Acceptance to Publications (Months)	Received to Publications (Months)
2023	2.6	1.3	3.9

Another thing is the withdrawal process for downgraded articles, downgraded articles are articles that were first submitted as Original article and after the peer-review process and evaluation it was decided to be revised as Brief Communication. We would like to affirm that this decision is final. Authors who refuse to revise and publish it as Brief Communication should follow the policy. We are committed to adhere to the withdrawal policy that is stated in the instruction to author. Only when it is reviewed and approved by the Editor, can the author officially withdraw the paper from the Journal and can be submitted elsewhere.

Annual statistics. This year we received 665 manuscripts from which we processed 354 articles that have complied with the Journal's requirements (Figure 1). Over the past 12 issues, we have published 3 Editorials, 7 Systematic Reviews, 17 Reviews, and 119 Originals, with a total of 1298 pages. Approximately 74.5% of the papers we published were from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Table 1). Our total rejection rate was 76% of which 47% were rejected at the initial decision. Initial screening plays a very important step as it determines the articles that will advance in the editorial processes. Submissions declined from this step are not sent to external reviewers and reviewed by the Board, hence, no other comments and remarks are sent to the authors. Most likely to be rejected at this stage are articles that are too old, more than 5 years, too specialized, not within our scope, adds nothing new to existing literature, and previously submitted to preprint servers.

The average processing time frame of original articles in year 2023 from received date to acceptance was 2.6 months, from acceptance to publication 1.3 months, and from received to publication 3.9 months.

We will have a whole new year ahead and we would like to thank our readers, authors, reviewers, and the Editorial team for their continued support over the years.

References

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Our thanks goes to the reviewers who have participated in the excellent review of manuscripts and books for the year 2023.

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