

Ibnosina Journal of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences 2009–2019: Achievements, Ambitions, and Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Ibnosina Journal of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (IJMBS) set off in 2009 to be a general medical journal that publishes good-quality scholarly work taking the passing the peer-review test as its core measure of quality.^[1,2] The editorial board, working on a voluntary basis, strived to lend support to both authors and peer reviewers from developing regions to enhance their knowledge and practical skills in writing and peer-reviewing.^[3] IJMBS aimed to provide an accommodating venue for publications on issues with specific interest in the health concerns of low- and middle-income countries, special concerns of ethnic nature and cultural relevance when maintaining the international standards, and being totally free from any volume or time pressures of both commercial and predatory journals.^[4] With this in mind, over the early years, the journal was supported by personal funding from the senior editors but more recently by a couple of unconditional educational grants donated by a charitable individual. Therefore, we have resisted all temptations to levy publication fees of any nature, thus clearly distancing ourselves from the “predatory” movement that is rampant in many parts of the developing world.^[3,4] Indeed, we have taken on the task of uncovering the tricks of the fake academia, bogus conferences and predatory journals, and publishers by our own original research and editorials.^[4-7]

To maintain the quality to our best possible, we have kept a low number of articles per issue in the past (Appendix 1) and we are very likely to keep the same strategy in the foreseeable future. We have been reporting periodically on the journal’s progress to our readers, authors, and reviewers as we really feel they do own the journal.^[8-12] Today, as IJMBS steps into its 12 year, we feel it is appropriate to share our view on appraising the achievements, revisit the ambitions, and face the challenges of the journal by reflecting on the volume, content, and impact.

ACHIEVEMENTS

For a journal starting from scratch, what has been achieved so far, ought to be commended. From a quality view point, IJMBS maintained a good editorial practice by embracing the guidelines of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, supported its cause, and kept abreast with its recommendations as they got revised.^[13] We have been supporting ethical practices and condemning editorial and authorship.^[14,15] We are very keen to promote ethics in clinical practice research and publication and have impacted several authors and some institutions in developing countries.^[16,17]

Numerically, a total of 421 articles in over 2000 pages were published by the journal since its inception [Figure 1a]. There was a clear dip in the number of articles in 2011 and 2012 (Appendix 1). Perhaps, this has happened in association with the major political changes in the Middle East. However, there was no clear upward trend since. The published articles included a fair variety [Figure 1b]. Every 4 of 10 of all the articles reflected unsolicited submissions of original research and 1 in 5, were review articles, editorials, commentaries, and viewpoints. However, short reports including case reports, quizzes, and clinical vignettes represented an excessive proportion of 25% of the articles in total [Figure 1c, Table 1, Appendix 1].

Unfortunately, our original publisher did not assign digital object identifier (DOI) for cross referencing to the journal’s articles nor we appreciated the importance of this ourselves in the editorial board. Sadly, this has kept many of our articles invisible form a considerable period. However, at the time of change of publishers, all our articles were assigned DOI numbers, which meant that prior citations were not taken into consideration. Hence, we had to use the Google Scholar Citations to evaluate the impact of articles published in the journal in this editorial. At the time of drafting this editorial,

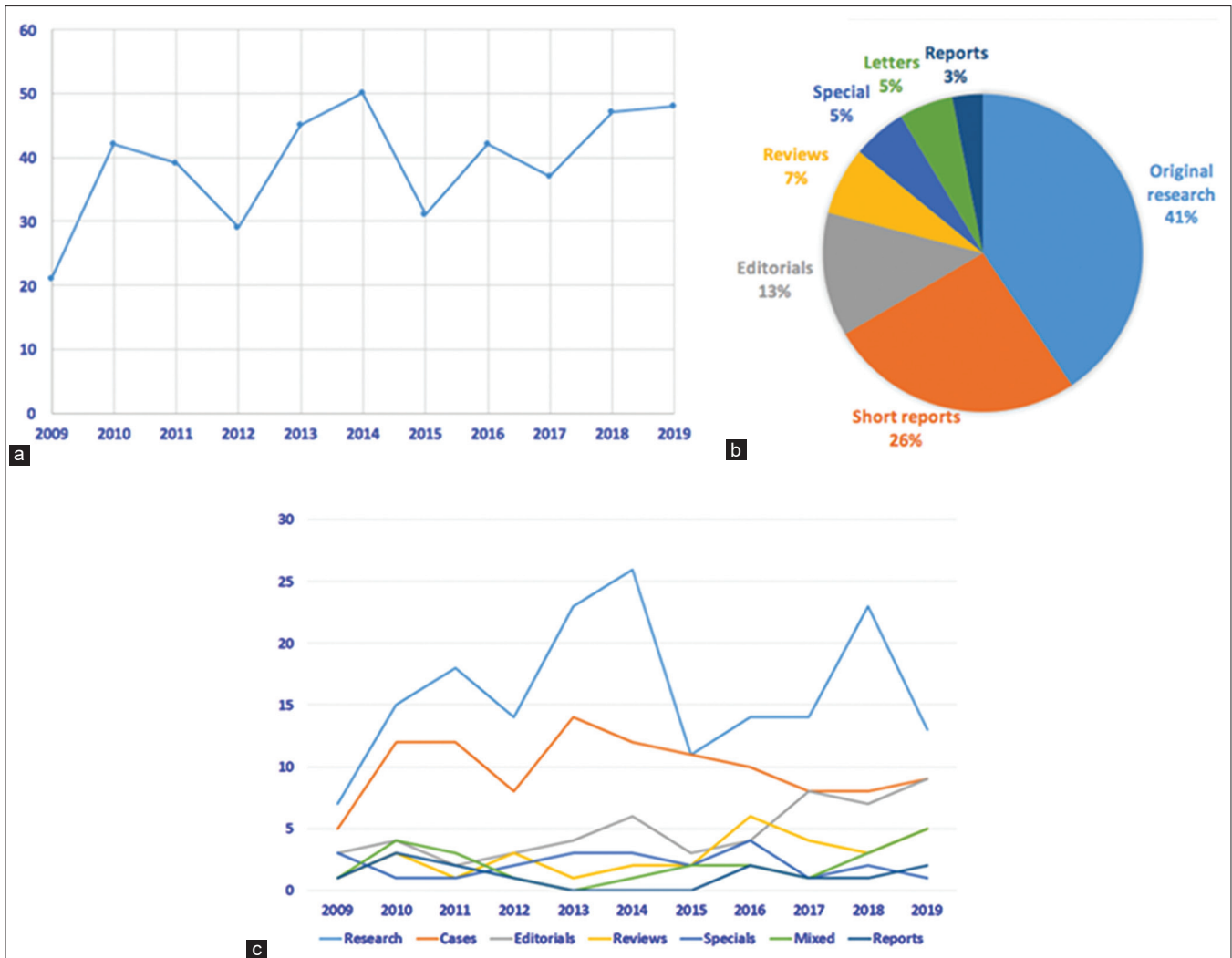


Figure 1: (a) Number of articles per year 2009–2019. (b) Types of articles. (c) Trend of the articles published by type of article

Table 1: Journal statistics of acceptance and rejections in total and for the main two article categories (original research and case reports)*

| Articles | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total submissions (decisions) | 84 (84) | 92 (92) | 91 (85) |
| Total decisions (%) | | | |
| Acceptance | 33 (39) | 43 (47) | 39 (46) |
| Rejections | 51 (61) | 49 (53) | 46 (54) |
| Original articles (%) | | | |
| Acceptance | 16 (36) | 18 (36) | 11 (28) |
| Rejections | 28 (64) | 32 (64) | 25 (64) |
| Case reports (%) | | | |
| Acceptance | 9 (39) | 7 (44) | 6 (46) |
| Rejections | 14 (61) | 9 (56) | 7 (54) |

*Data provided by the publisher Medknow for the last 3 years (2017–2019). Available from: www.ijmbs.org. [Last accessed on 2020 Feb 06].

one article has over 90 “lifetime citations”, six articles attracted between 30 and 50 citations, and 15 articles were cited between 11 and 26 times [Table 2]. These

citations occurred despite the lack of indexation in Scopus and Medline databases which precludes calculation of a formal Impact Factor (IF). We are aware of the limits of emerging journals and remain to focus on medical research from developing countries. We also understand that many challenges are facing us and have to continue walking this difficult path with steady steps.

AMBITIONS

The journal was started with several goals in mind: (1) helping authors from developing countries publish their research and share it with the international medical community for evaluation and discussion; (2) training of new-generation reviewers to participate in critiquing and evaluating medical research manuscripts; and (3) producing a journal that is

Table 2: Top 20 articles with highest number of total citations

| Number | Authors | Type | Title/theme | Year | Citations |
|--------|-------------------|----------|---|------|-----------|
| 1 | SA Beshyah | Special | Fasting during the month of Ramadan for people with diabetes: Medicine and Fiqh united at last | 2009 | [95] |
| 2 | MA Zaidi | Review | Needle Stick Injuries: An overview of the size of the problem, prevention and management | 2010 | [47] |
| 2 | GC Akuodor, | Original | Evaluation of the antidiarrheal activity of methanol leaf extract of <i>B. buonopozense</i> in rats | 2011 | [47] |
| 4 | R El-Masry | Original | Perceived stress and burnout among medical students during the clinical period of their education | 2013 | [43] |
| 5 | SA Beshyah | Special | Ramadan fasting and the medical patient: An overview for clinicians | 2010 | [37] |
| 6 | ST Hakim | Research | An experience with dengue in Pakistan: An expanding problem | 2011 | [35] |
| 6 | EC Ibezim | Research | Ionically cross-linked chitosan/tripolyphosphate microparticles for the controlled delivery of pyrimethamine | 2011 | [35] |
| 8 | L Arora | Research | Role of dissection in anatomy teaching from the perspective of undergraduate students: A qualitative study | 2011 | [26] |
| 9 | M Paul | Research | Effect of sensory motor rhythm neurofeedback on psycho-physiological, electro-encephalographic measures and performance of archery players | 2012 | [24] |
| 10 | S Thomas | Research | Causes and pattern of tooth mortality among adult patients in a teaching dental Hospital | 2010 | [21] |
| 11 | ASH Greiw | Research | Risk factors for cardiovascular diseases among school teachers | 2010 | [19] |
| 12 | PO Abu | Research | Correlation between placental thickness and estimated fetal weight in women | 2009 | [17] |
| 13 | JR Peela | Review | Cardiac biomarkers: The troponins and CK-MB | 2010 | [16] |
| 14 | HE Mustafa | Original | The effect of “targeted diabetes education” on glycemic control during Ramadan fasting | 2012 | [15] |
| 15 | MF El-Bab | Research | Evaluation of basic medical sciences knowledge retention among medical students | 2011 | [14] |
| 15 | M Hosapatna | Research | Morphology of papillary muscles in human adults: A cadaveric study | 2014 | [14] |
| 17 | A Balasubramaniam | Research | Role of myofascial release therapy on pain and lumbar range of motion in mechanical back pain: An exploratory investigation of desk job workers | 2014 | [13] |
| 18 | SA Beshyah | Report | Non-communicable diseases and diabetes care guidelines: Epidemiology and call for collective action | 2010 | [12] |
| 18 | AF Bisheya | Research | Community pharmacists’ knowledge, attitude and practice towards diabetes care | 2011 | [12] |
| 20 | NB Arfan | Research | Medicinal properties of the <i>Sesbania grandiflora</i> leaves | 2016 | [11] |
| 20 | P Sharma | Research | Variation in the response to pain between athletes and non-athletes | 2011 | [11] |
| 20 | JS Sandhu | Research | Efficacy of spirulina supplementation on isometric strength and isometric endurance of quadriceps in trained and untrained individuals: A comparative study | 2010 | [11] |

worthy of international indexation by databases such as PubMed database. We did fairly well with the first two goals, but somehow we have not achieved the third goal. Our ambition at this point is to get indexed in PubMed to expand our readers, reviewers, as well as authors. The journal will also continue to expand its recognition by different medical indices and recognition as a scientific resource in different libraries. We hope to be the voice addressing any issues of medical education, health-care regulation, and ethnic concerns.^[18-21]

CHALLENGES

The body of published material remains modest. The editorial board is particularly disappointed in the lack of a significant rise in the number of articles over the years [Figure 1a and Table 1, Appendix 1]. At the same time, the authors remain shy about the

PubMed and Scopus situation. The editors feel that the comments from Medline’s selection panel were reasonable in 2015 and we have since addressed all the internal elements included therein. However, we feel strongly believe that criticisms by some of the commercial indexation services were either subjective, superficial and unfair and perhaps prejudiced and based on conflict of interest and amounting unfair trading. For instance, to state as a negative point that “the journal seems to be established and run by a group of diaspora doctors from Libya” is hardly a relevant academic criterion for assessment. Also, to keep reiterating that the journal is “associated with a questionable publisher” despite repeated clarifications that the journal is published by a PubMed-recognized international publisher with more than 450 medical titles, many of which are indexed by the National Library of

Medicine is annoying to say the least. These data available on file for whomsoever interest, as we feel that many emerging journals are suffering the same prejudice. Lack of serious reviewers remains a challenging issue more than authors. We do realize that reviewers' committed time is purely voluntary and not well acknowledged among bosses of reviewers. This issue made reviewers highly hesitant to offer their help to an emerging journal. We continued to fund the journal privately in order not to burden the authors from developing countries with the publication expenses and to clearly distinguish ourselves from predatory journals whose sole aim is financial gain. We wish our reviewers to acknowledge this point and help us achieve a thorough and honest review process to advance medical sciences across the globe. Naturally, at one point, we are expected to evolve the journal's funding from private finance by committed editors to more formal unconditional donations, grants, and to some extent authors' contributions once the indexation position is resolved. Yet with the currently available and searchable issues and indexation by commonly used search engines such as Google Scholar, lack of PubMed indexation at this stage should be a reason for perseverance rather than a cause for frustration of the editors nor a barrier to attract appropriate submissions primarily by regional authors.

As from the current issue, *Ibnosina Journal of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences* becomes the official publication of The Libyan Authority of Scientific Research and Technology and the Biotechnology Research Center (Libya) and will relocate its main editorial office to Tripoli, Libya while keeping its international presence through its USA branch.

CONCLUSIONS

IJMBS has completed its first decade and continued to walk through the very challenging path. At this point, we will continue to focus on the quality, ethics, and integrity of the reviewing process and the published articles. We will keep the number of published articles the same until we hopefully get into PubMed. In the meantime, we reiterate the invitation to our colleagues to come forward

and help with the burden of reviewing potential manuscripts.

Authors' contributions

Equal.

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Nil.

Conflicts of interest

None.

Compliance with ethical principles

Not applicable.

Elmahdi A. Elkhammas¹, Salem A. Beshyah^{2,3}

¹Department of Transplant Surgery, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA, ²Department of Medicine, Dubai Medical College, Dubai, ³Department of Endocrinology, Mediclinic Airport Road Hospital, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Address for correspondence: Prof. Elmahdi A. Elkhammas, Department of Transplant Surgery, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA.
E-mail: elmahdi.elkhammas@osumc.edu

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Salem A Beshyah (Abu Dhabi, UAE)
Elmahdi A Elkhammas (Columbus OH, USA)

Appendix 1: Detailed general bibliometric analysis of the 421 articles published in *Ibnosina Journal of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences* between 2009 and 2019

| Year | Original research | Case reports, quizzes, clinical vignettes | Editorials, viewpoints, comments | Review articles | Special communications, pathology, abstracts, history | Letters, obituaries, books | Conference highlights, Practice point |
|------|-------------------|---|----------------------------------|-----------------|---|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2009 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| 2010 | 15 | 12 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| 2011 | 18 | 12 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 2012 | 14 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 2013 | 23 | 14 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 2014 | 26 | 12 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 2015 | 11 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 2016 | 14 | 10 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| 2017 | 14 | 8 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2018 | 23 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| 2019 | 13 | 9 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 2 |