

Editorial

The Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Journal: The Journey So Far ...

The Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Journal (NPMJ), the official publication of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria (NPMCN), was born with the June 1994 maiden issue after a series of publicity network which spanned over a period of 1-year.^[1] 'Thus the journal is born 15 years after the birth of its master NPMCN, brought into the World of Nigeria by Decree No. 67 of 1979',^[1] now Cap N59 Laws of the Federation 2004. The NPMCN is a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal setup as the tertiary institution at the apex of medical education in Nigeria. It aims to produce medical and dental specialists of the highest standards who will provide world class services in teaching, research and health care. The President of the NPMCN in 1994 stated that 'The journal we are launching now is the culmination of healthy debates in the Senate of the college about the desirability to have a journal, an apex journal for the apex medical training institution in Nigeria'.^[2] In his goodwill message, he said 'I congratulate the editor and his energetic editorial board for overcoming all odds to make sure that the journal makes its debut'.^[2]

Professor John Taiwo da Rocha-Afodu, the first Editor/Chairman of the Editorial Board of NPMJ, from the Department of Surgery, College of Medicine, University of Lagos (CMUL) and Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), in his editorial entitled 'Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Journal – Maiden Issue: The official journal of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria'; mentioned 'the enormous problems bedeviling journals in developing countries. Financial constraint is a leading factor, which has sent many journals into their graves – alas with premature death indeed'.^[1] Another anticipated problem was the paucity of articles submitted for publication. Be that as it may, NPMCN has risen up to the occasion to assist the journal. The Editorial Board of the Journal has in turn reciprocated by taking steps to surmount all obstacles'.^[1] To fellows and associate fellows, The President of the NPMCN gave a 'solemn assurance that enough funds have been provided by the Senate to make sure that the journal does not die after the Vol. 1 No. 1 edition'.^[2]

The editor, the editorial board and the officers of the NPMCN accepted the 'sacred mandate to forge ahead with this journal and keep it in perpetuity for posterity'.^[1] Professor JT da Rocha-Afodu, MB; BS (Newcastle upon Tyne), MD (Rochester), FRCS (Edinburg), FMCS (Nigeria), FWACS; the first Editor in Chief (EIC)/Chairman of the Editorial Board, ensured that the NPMJ did not die after the Vol. 1 No. 1 edition. His characteristic ability to surmount all obstacles followed by effective performance guaranteed a successful outcome for all the projects he laid his hands upon. During his leadership, a solid foundation was laid and the NPMJ thrived. The reliable, efficient and adroit EIC from his editorial offices situated at NPMCN, 96, Moshood Abiola Way, Ebute Metta, Lagos, and the Department of Surgery CMUL, with the assistance of the editorial board members,

reviewers, NPMCN officials and printers, produced all issues of the peer-reviewed print only quarterly journal from 1994 to 2003. His first application for indexing of NPMJ with MEDLINE/Index Medicus was successful. Subsequently, all the abstracts of the articles published by NPMJ became available in PubMed from January 2001. On behalf of the NPMCN and NPMJ Editorial Board of 2016, I hereby salute and thank Professor da Rocha-Afodu, now, a Distinguished Fellow of NPMCN (DFMC) and Emeritus Professor of the University of Lagos for his selfless and meritorious service to the College and the NPMJ.

Professor Olumuyiwa Adebayo Afonja, M.B., Ch.B. (St. And.), M.Sc. Biochem (Lond.), MD (Lagos), FWACP, FMCPATH, from the Department of Clinical Pathology, CMUL and LUTH was an editor from 1999 to 2003 and the second EIC of NPMJ from 2004 to 2014. He continued the good works of the first EIC in a characteristic pleasant, meticulous and efficient manner. He is a wise businessman and investor. The NPMJ benefited from his business acumen. The need for the NPMJ to become a print and online journal was recognised. Professor OA Afonja on the 14th March 2014 signed the memorandum of understanding between NPMJ and Wolters Kluwer/Medknow Publications, India (WKMP), for the printing, provision of journal website, online editorial office and manuscript management system. On behalf of the NPMCN and NPMJ Editorial Board of 2016, I hereby salute and thank Professor OA Afonja, now, a DFMC and Contract Professor at the College of Medicine, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria, for his selfless and meritorious service to the College and the NPMJ.

I became the third EIC/Chairman of Editorial Board of NPMJ on the 1st January 2015. Professors da Rocha-Afodu and Afonja were my mentors and advisers. I count myself honoured to be the successor of these well-educated academicians and great editors. I learnt the rudiments of editorial work under the tutelage of Professor da Rocha-Afodu when I was the assistant editor of Nigerian Journal of Surgery (NJS) from January 1997 to December 2004 while he was the simultaneous EIC of NPMJ and NJS. I became a member of the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) in September 2015. To further facilitate the running of the NPMJ, I attended the WAME workshop for medical editors: A journal editor's toolkit and the international conference for medical journal editors at New Delhi, India, in October 2015. The workshop and conference provided the opportunity to interact with and learn from editors of renowned journals. More importantly, it provided the opportunity to discuss NPMJ with executive officers of WKMP.

The websites of NPMJ; www.npmj.org and www.journalonweb.com/npmj were launched by WKMP on the 2nd July 2015. Training of the EIC on the use of manuscript management system took place during a 3 h interactive Skype session offered by the technical support executive of WKMP on the 18th June 2015. The Journal on Web version 5.0 Users'

Manual consisting of 198 PowerPoint slides was sent to all editors, associate editors and the new secretary. The journal details and preferences were uploaded into the system, and online submission and management of manuscripts started on 4th July 2015. The first phase of the retrospective archive publishing project which consists of the full text of all articles of each issue from 2011 to 2015 was completed on 14th January 2016. The second phase which was the publication of abstracts alone from 2001 to 2010 was completed on 3rd May 2016. At present, we have online back issues from January 2001 to June 2015 published retrospectively, and the September 2015, December 2015, March 2016 and June 2016 issues published prospectively by WKMP. A large online archive containing the full text of all articles published from inception is the most valuable asset of a journal. Online archives provide access to full text articles that invariably facilitate citation by authors which allow journals to earn impact factor. A tedious retrospective digitisation of hard copies of issues will be required to achieve this objective.

In the 1st year of our online existence from 2nd July 2015, we encountered some challenges. First, online submission rate of manuscripts was low. To solve this problem, the manuscript submission fee of USD 80 was suspended. The submission rate improved but we want submission of large numbers of good quality manuscripts from authors worldwide. Request for commissioned review articles on contemporary topics from NPMCN fellows that are experts in various fields is an option we are exploring. Second, some Nigerian authors experienced difficulty in paying the article processing charge online. This problem has been resolved. Online payment can be made easily using a stable internet service and MasterCard with secure code. Moreover, in the 1st year of online existence, we detected two cases of duplicate publications during the editorial process. The two manuscripts were promptly rejected and evidences were sent to our College. We encountered some unethical author practices which were resolved. We are particularly worried of 'avatar misconduct'. This is when a fake or appropriately named suggested reviewer by an author has the e-mail and telephone number of the author or the third party related to them. If such a suggested reviewer is selected, the author deceitfully directly or indirectly reviews his or her own manuscript.^[3] We are also reluctant to select reviewers suggested by verified reviewers on our database that decline to review a manuscript. Avatar misconduct will be equally difficult to detect when local or foreign authors suggest reviewers. This misconduct was mentioned again at the New Delhi WAME conference in 2015. The instructions to the authors were updated twice since 2nd July 2015 to reduce the rate of technical modifications. We hereby enjoin all authors to carefully follow instructions to the authors at our website, especially for preparing the first page and article files.

The NPMJ Editorial Board members are very happy with our partnership with WKMP. Easy to navigate website, versatile online editorial office, efficient manuscript management system, fast transfer of issue content to indexing agencies

and high-quality printing are some of the advantages of the partnership. I hereby thank WKMP, especially for the fast and effective handling of our retrospective archive publishing project. Full text of articles from 2011 to 2015 was uploaded and published in <2 months (23rd November 2015–14th January 2016). Abstracts alone from a period of 10 years (2001–2010) were published gradually over a period of 5 months (29th November 2015–3rd May 2016). NPMJ appeared online on the 2nd July 2015, established fast, we put our acts together and we believe we are performing satisfactorily but we are not yet there. At present, the journal is registered with the following abstracting partners; China National Knowledge Infrastructure, EBSCO Publishing's Electronic Databases, Exlibris – Primo Central, Google Scholar, Hinari, Infotrieve, Journal Guide, National Science Library, the Netherlands ISSN Center, OpenJGate, ProQuest and TdNet. The journal is indexed with MEDLINE/Index Medicus, and Scimago Journal Ranking.

How far has NPMJ gone in the journey? The third EIC is learning by experiencing the journey while focusing on getting to the destination. The first aim of NPMJ is to provide a medium for recording and dissemination of the results of clinical and scientific medical research, particularly in the College and other allied institutions in Nigeria and the rest of the world. We shall continue to publish regularly, in a timely manner, utilising a fast, consistent and effective editorial process that allows the precise selection of good quality research works for publication.^[4-6] Our partnership with WKMP will definitely facilitate the achievement of our goal.

First, I want to thank all the authors who had submitted their manuscripts to the NPMJ. Without good articles, a journal cannot survive. Thank you! Second, I want to thank all the members of the editorial board; editors, associate editors from the 15 faculties of our College and assistant editors for making sure we perform satisfactorily as a team. Thank you! The Reviewers! The journal cannot survive without the invaluable contributions of reviewers. Thank you! I hereby thank the NPMCN President, Registrar, Treasurer, members of staff of the NPMCN, fellows, associate fellows, readers, printing and advertising companies for supporting the NPMJ. May The Almighty Father continue to guide and bless us all.

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