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Biomedical Editing in Nepal: A Challenging Task

Yogendra P Singh, MD, PhD

Department of Surgery, Maharajgunj Medical Campus, Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, Institute of Medicine, Kathmandu, Nepal

Email: ypsingh2065@gmail.com

Biomedical publications in the form of journals are specialized subject specific articles. Ideally, they should be peer reviewed and indexed to ensure the standard of scientific validity. Publication is the final destination of any biomedical research. Science will not survive without publication. If the results of any research are not disseminated, there is no existence of that research.

The French publication Journal 'des sçavans' and the English publication 'Philosophical Transactions' of the Royal Society were the landmark publications in 1660s for the history of biomedical journalism. In Nepal, Journal of Nepal Medical Association (JNMA) is the first medical journal, established in 1963 under the leadership of Prof MR Pandey.¹ The Journal of Institute of Medicine (JIOM) Nepal is the second oldest biomedical journal, started in 1979. At present, more than 40 biomedical journals, mainly from medical subspecialty organizations and medical colleges, are published in Nepal. A few journals are indexed in PubMed also. There has been continuous improvement in biomedical publication in Nepal.² Recently in 2019, Nepalese online indexing system (NepMed) to access the biomedical journals in Nepal has been initiated by Nepal Health Research Council.

In academic institutions, scientific publications are mandatory for either getting postgraduate degree or carrier advancement. Publications are also part of promotion of health and advocacy of the research work. With the advent of health research culture in academic institutions, research publications can improve the academic as well as financial status of the institute.

Biomedical editing is both science and art of communication. There is a lack of formal education or training in this field even in high income countries. A few people will choose his or her whole carrier in medical editing. In low-income countries including Nepal, biomedical editing is not an easy task because this work has had both financial as well as skilled manpower constraints. This problem can be overcome by incorporating the essential components of biomedical editing in the core curriculum.³

Biomedical editing is a bridging course between scientific writing and publication. An excellent format of the scientific publication is as a result of scientific

editing process. This editing process includes editorial office desk review, subject editor review and finally external peer review.³ When an article is accepted for publication after the review process, then the process of publication formatting like page setup, tables and figures begins. Proof reading by authors is again an ultimate chance of correction before actual publication of the article in a journal. Thus, biomedical editing has a huge impact on scientific publication.

In Nepal, biomedical editors are experienced either by doing research or by scientific publication. They achieve the quality of an editor by working in a journal. However, there are harsh situations like lack of proper editorial office in which the editor has to work. An editor cannot work fully if he or she is not supported by a team of editorial staff. Information technology support to the editorial process is vital for increased visibility, online submission and review. Moreover, online journals are economical as well as quick to access.

Unless the journal is indexed in PubMed and other citation systems, it is not easy to get good quality manuscripts and reviewers. Our editorial board is striving to get Journal of Institute of Medicine Nepal (*JIOM Nepal*) indexed into these systems.

Most biomedical journals have strict guidelines for authors' conflict of interest.³ But editors and reviewers have relatively more freedom for competing interests. Biomedical editors are usually accountable to the authors, patients and eventually to the public for the reliability of the publication.⁴ Although biomedical editing is a challenging task, we can speculate a positive change in terms of scientific publication in Nepal in foreseeable future.

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