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### Visual Abstracts in Medical Journals

Social media, especially Twitter, crept into academic fields and have become a vital part of all the medical fields and journals.<sup>1</sup> Medical journals have been increasingly using Twitter to disseminate their contents to attract a wider readership.<sup>1,2</sup> The Transplantation Journal, that started tweeting from 2015 to “improve engagement with readership and connect with the authors”, showed that the papers that were tweeted were three times more likely to be downloaded than the non-tweeted ones ( $p < 0.001$ ).<sup>3</sup>

Some of the journals started new initiatives to improve their interactions with readers in social media like podcasts, video abstracts and reviews, and Visual Abstracts (VA). VA is a form of graphical abstract used by medical journals. VA was introduced in Annals of Surgery in July 2016.<sup>4</sup> Other forms of graphical abstracts in the field of chemistry had appeared as early as 1976.<sup>5</sup> VA is a visual summary of a research manuscript. It consists of a single-page poster that is simple, eye-catching, and summarizes the background, methodology, results, and conclusion of the study. These are published or tweeted for improved dissemination of the paper, for deeper engagement of scientists, and to influence busy readers.<sup>6</sup> VA is widely integrated in lectures also. Impact of VA was studied by Ibrahim et al in a prospective, case-control cross-over study<sup>4</sup>. VA improved twitter impression by 7.7 fold ( $p < 0.001$ ) and re-tweets by 8.4 fold ( $p < 0.001$ ). The article visits of the journal also improved 2.7 folds ( $p < 0.001$ ).

VA took over scientific publication and its application also became popular in related areas like scientific conferences and journal clubs.<sup>7</sup> Though VA needs time, understanding, and imagination to make the content complete and deliver concise yet attractive visual message, Shingada A and Conjeevaram A introduced a concept of #LiveVisualAbstract in AVATAR 2018 conference where VA were created live during the sessions and instantly tweeted.<sup>8</sup> The result was a significant rise in number of impressions ( $p < 0.001$ ), engagements ( $p < 0.001$ ), retweets ( $p < 0.001$ ), likes ( $p < 0.001$ ), and profile visits ( $p < 0.001$ ) proving that VA does not consume much time and resources not to be included in scientific meetings.

For those interested in creating VA of their work, there are resources to guide. Two notable ones are from Andrew M. Ibrahim.<sup>9,10</sup> Submission of VA is encouraged but is optional in most of the journals and provide full instruction along with templates on how VA should be created. It is also important to realize that there are certain obstacles and limitations of VA.<sup>6,7</sup> VA, though desired, may not be feasible for journals with limited budgets. It is also not a substitute for reading the article and is prone to bias and errors of the creator and misinterpretation by the readers. With the increasing demand of VA from authors, all of whom may not be able to create one, VA may lose its relevance as stated by Joel Topf who leads #NephJC, a monthly online journal club and is a visual abstract editor of Clinical Journal of American Society of Nephrology.<sup>11</sup>

As for now, adoption of VA in our journal is something we should consider to improve the readership of the journal. NMJ will encourage but keep it optional for the authors to submit VA which will be tweeted by the handle @nepmedjourn.

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Editorial



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Editorial