

Two years of J-AIM

The New England Journal of Medicine (*NEJM*) recently celebrated its 200th anniversary and *J-AIM* is celebrating its second to enter its third year of publication. When we compare these two events, the time difference is the first thing that comes to mind. We often compare the contemporary status of Ayurveda with that of the modern biomedical system, but fail to recognize the various supportive factors that led to the emergence of Modern Medicine as the world's mainstream health care system. *NEJM* and dozens of other high-quality journals constitutes one of the factors that have certainly played a role in its mainstreaming. In comparison, *J-AIM* with its 2 years of history is a novice in the world of journals, but we have in our vision the landmark laid by *NEJM*. Ayurveda advises, "one should not get distracted by eyeing success but should rather concentrate on continuous improvement of the quality of one's efforts."^[1] This will certainly be *J-AIM*'s endeavor.

Ayurveda as a science has a history of more than 5000 years. While it has evolved brilliantly through a large part of its evolution and expressed distilled knowledge of principles (*tattva*), science (*sashtra*), and applications, yet in recent centuries the science has faced political discrimination and been almost totally deprived of economic state support. This kind of starvation can easily destroy knowledge systems. That it has survived all this dishonor speaks of its inherent strength and the tenacity of its community-based supporters. It is due to these factors that growth and development of Ayurveda in recent centuries has not been at par with that of other sciences. This is an injustice to a great Indian knowledge legacy that we need to correct both for the sake of Indians and global citizens and this is what *J-AIM* has repeatedly pleaded through its numerous illuminating articles.

Historically, sciences grow and develop at the pleasure of those that wear the crown. Royal patronage has had the maximum effect on the development of any discipline, irrespective of its inherent strength. During the long history of Ayurveda there have been several regimes that

encouraged it, but there were few who also tried to destroy it. Now that the Government of India has recognized its merits and created an exclusive department with tax payer's money to promote it, the scholars and practitioners of Ayurveda should organize themselves, create a credible and united platform, and firmly advise governments on how they should advance the cause of Ayurveda. Whether the science will flourish or not is really the responsibility of its votaries and not of the government.

What Ayurveda needs today is a culture of research. A new generation of physician-scientists who would question every tenet, however basic, and reject those that fail to stand to objective scrutiny and retain those that do. What we need to evolve is the development of new contemporary transdisciplinary methodologies, suitable for Ayurveda.^[2] Although this will be an ongoing process and will take time, it should be initiated quickly. Each and every health care researcher must be well acquainted with the global health care scenario and priority areas for research. For this, important Allopathy journals should be made available along with Ayurveda ones.

Next, what we lack are the required skills to communicate the advantages of Ayurveda to the common man, in his language. No syllabus, whether at graduate or postgraduate level includes a reasonable module on scientific communication and medical writing. No sufficient effort is taken for the development of soft skills in these professionals. Even most of the academicians lack these skills. The document "AYUSH in India 2010" says that we have 2384 admissions to postgraduate courses in Ayurveda annually. These and students working for higher degrees (such as Ph.D.) all do research, but where are the results of their labor?

It is shocking to see the number of publications in peer-reviewed publications pertaining to Ayurveda. PubMed indexed about 649 articles from Ayurveda out of a total of almost two and half million articles (2491570) in 2011.^[3] This works out to a measly 0.026%. It is not that no research is done, what little is done is not even published, that is the sad story.

Many overseas universities link peer-reviewed publications of their faculty with their performance. This is not common in India, and in any case faculty members in Ayurveda colleges have little incentive to either engage in research or publish it. Ayurveda education is imparted by about 254

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colleges, of these 55 are government colleges, whereas the rest are private. It would not be out of place to suggest that governmental efforts notwithstanding, Ayurveda education is in the hands of private managements. Staff and faculty in these colleges are very poorly paid. In a country where the *Guru* is described as *Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh*, the *Guru* is the poorest paid of all. Hence, it is not realistic to expect the teachers to do much in addition to teaching.

There is a need to encourage the best and brightest of students to opt for Ayurveda as their first career choice. There is also a need to reform the Ayurveda education system to make the young minds interested in the basic principles. This will help them become better teachers when they graduate.

Need to help Ayurveda research publications

Much is being talked about globalization of Ayurveda and mainstreaming of Ayurveda, but when we think of the number of peer-reviewed research Ayurveda journals, the situation is bad.^[5] Publication of a journal is a costly affair, and even those dedicated to modern medicine are feeling the pinch. Ideally, journals should be self-dependent over a course of time, but the availability of the Internet has queered the pitch. Many journals were initially free access journals, but they no longer allow free access to the full text of articles, since such an access affects their subscription. Old journals (such as *NEJM*), with a solid reputation can still survive, whereas new journals still face existential dilemmas.

A new journal to become popular requires wide circulation and coverage, which can be achieved through free access on the Internet. But, free access on the net reduces the subscriptions to the journal and hence its income or independence. The two possibilities that journals face are a sad demise due to lack of popularity, or a demise due to lack of funds. In the light of this paradox *NEJM* completing 200 years deserves accolades, and we would

like to emulate it. The trend so far is encouraging. In the first year of our existence the journal received 146 articles of which 50% were accepted and published. In the second year the journal received 239 articles of which 26% were accepted. It is not an Editorial policy to reject articles, but it is a matter of pride that within 2 years the journal has become so selective.

We welcome scholarly submissions to *J-AIM*. Authors may visit: <http://jaim.in/contributors.asp> for the modified Instructions to Authors.

In the Editorial office, we consider patience as an important virtue. At *J-AIM* we will patiently await the growth which our counterparts at *NEJM* have achieved. It is in co-operation and not in competition that we will grow. After all, the objectives of those at *NEJM* and *J-AIM* are the same—Health for all.

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