

I Bid Goodbye!

It is time for me to take the curtain call. I need to bid farewell as editor in chief for this *Journal*. I need to record my observations for the next to don the mantle of this tedious task.

The task was enormous. There was a 2 year backlog. I concentrated on clearing the long pending articles. Unfortunately, there are only 4 issues a year. The maximum we could accommodate was about 40 articles a piece. Help for reviewing is not readily forthcoming. The well-known names in oncology are utterly silent. They are hard up for time.

This forced me to I venture into subjects and territories I scarcely knew. I read up reviews I never thought I would glance at! It was indeed a rich experience.

Some just cannot imbibe technology. They continue to snail-post documentation. The incomplete submission is chiefly from those with this special dyslexia: about 5-6%. They need assistance.

Some authors are argumentative: they expect me to comply with *their* institutional norms! I am utterly ruthless with the written word – much to their disdain.

Frantic calls from an unknown number in a not-so-familiar tongue is typically an assistant professor seeking a confirmatory email to aid the annual appraisal or promotion. I generally obliged.

Those wishing to jump the queue are from the industry: the publication is typically of a trial for marketing. I seldom acquiesced.

The arm-chair author is habituated to extrapolating a simple formula to a given geographic area to arrive at a meaningless figure. It typically reads much like the dialogues in vernacular subtitling in a foreign language movie. I weeded them out.

The data-miner is dangerous! Will manipulate a new set of variables from a single sheet to arrive a not-so-novel result. The text remains the same for all the articles: the sequence of authors and figures change a bit! Needs a lot of vigilance.

The series of clinico-demographic-pathological correlation studies from 'tertiary-care' centres in east/north/south/west India (and other directions –SSW, NNE, etc!) are predictable: they assume that India is still 680 princely

states with utterly isolated genetically distinct pools (apologies to Sardar Patel). The surmise might be true of perhaps the dialect spoken or the frying medium. They need a second police action!

I could not muster courage to ask far and wide for advertisements to fund the volumes. Surprisingly, all the paid publications had more than a dozen each! I should have been a little more persuasive.

To me, the plethora of oncology publications from India underscores the widening gaps with narrowing areas of expertise. Some appear to be just ego trips of the editors. Most online publications are notorious – the output of a net-savvy geek exploiting the 'publish or perish' attitude of the so called academia. I sincerely believe I presented IJMPO as an honest, down to earth, peer reviewed, readable and dependable publication.

I did my best to get things streamlined. Our publication has slipped out of grace from PubMed for past sins. It is all the more reason that the editorial team girdle up their loins and strive to restore it to its rightful place.

My suggestions are humble: sieve the editorial board – there is too much chaff! Weed out all those reviewers who never ever replied. Clean the slate. Start with a whiff of fresh talent. In short, thoroughly overhaul!

There are a few bright spots in this innings: the gentle Prof. Sudeep Gupta. He is quick to reply, typically, with an implementable solution. There are very good and *dependable* reviewers, who are pillars of academic strength. Mr. Yogesh Kumbhavi: a sort of man-Friday at the virtual secretariat. I trust they remain so for the rest of their life.

My wife, Dr. Leela, helped me plough through the flood of papers with focus on screening and prevention as well as outcomes research. She also bore the silent treatment through all Sundays and most holidays as I spent hours on end poring over the manuscripts on a laptop screen. My sincere thanks.

I firmly believe in the poet: '*Old order changeth yielding place to new, Lest one good custom should corrupt the world!*' (The apostrophe is mine).

I hope the runner taking the baton from me at the end of my lap is fresh, energetic, enjoys turning boredom to work, has an understanding spouse, and, lots-n-lots of patience!

I bow down deep – to the author somnolent in some of you
and the erudite reader in everyone of you!

Adieu!

Raghunadharao Digumarti

*Director, Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre,
Aganampudi, Visakhapatnam - 530 053, Andhra Pradesh, India
E-mail: telerama@rediffmail.com*

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