

## The AAMS, Your Journal

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I have had the pleasure of serving on the Editorial Board of the Annals, Academy of Medicine, Singapore (AAMS), under 2 indefatigable, dedicated and farsighted editors – Vernon Oh and EK Tan, and now take up the mantle of Editor-in-Chief with anticipation, yet mindful of the big shoes I have to fill. Under the leadership of both these editors, the AAMS has risen from an obscure, largely local journal, to one that now receives submissions from all over the world.

In the last decade, we have seen the AAMS breaking the 1.0 Journal Citation Reports impact factor (IF) barrier in 2008 (no mean feat, considering we did not have one before the year 2000). Whilst the Editorial Board of the Annals has not obsessed with “chasing the numbers”, we have been mindful that having a decent IF has meant that we have been able to attract meaningful and impactful papers from researchers around the world. This has meant, of course, that the AAMS became more relevant to our readership. The journal has, perhaps, been denied a further rise in its IF (and indeed, the IF has fallen slightly in this last year) because of the general nature of the journal. Catering to general practitioners, surgeons, physicians, subspecialists and scientists has allowed the AAMS to proffer to its readership a cornucopia of interesting articles. At the same time, however, it has suffered from being “too general”, and offering “simplistic” articles.

In our efforts to be relevant and relatable to the local and international community, we of the AAMS have steadfastly maintained that the journal must be provided gratis to the medical community. We have been fortunate in having our parent organisation, the Academy of Medicine, Singapore, allow us to give hard copies of the journal to all Fellows of the Academy, whilst also providing pdf copies free of charge, via our website. Unfortunately, what is freely given is often also under-appreciated.

I have heard colleagues making disparaging remarks about the journal, maintaining that its offerings are not of high standard; yet others have felt chagrined that their articles

have not been accepted for publication, complaining that “local journals should publish local articles”. This, then, is a double-edged sword. The AAMS is a journal for the medical community and must be the flag-bearer for local researchers, and yet it must maintain its standards.

The Editorial Board of the AAMS is proud to report that, since 1990, all submitted articles are anonymised to reviewers and indeed, to the Editorial Board, when deciding on their suitability for publication. We have also made it a policy to send articles to suitable, well published reviewers in the field, to assess the scripts for scientific rigour, relevance, and clinical importance. We will continue to do so, whilst remaining mindful of our charge to promote local research endeavours. To that end, we have tried our best to provide useful and constructive comments, in addition to those of our reviewers, in helping worthy articles get published in the journal.

We have increased the number of sections in the journal, to make the journal more interesting and relevant to our readership – e.g. we now publish images in medicine, commentaries, basic science, and medical education articles. We will also introduce Academy Matters, a supplementary newsletter to accompany the journal, featuring speeches, abstracts, *materia non medica*, and other articles that may not be suitable for publication in the journal proper, but are relevant and useful nonetheless.

One of the criticisms levied against the journal is that we have been tardy in returning decisions on papers. This is partly true. We have tried to make first-cut decisions on whether articles merit being sent for review, and have, I think, improved in getting rejection notices to unsuccessful authors within a fortnight, if not within a week. Where we have failed is in getting good quality reviews (and suggestions for improvement) out within a suitably short time – but again, this, we have addressed, and will continue to try to improve on. Moving forward, we will set up a schema to ensure that all articles will be processed within 3 months of submission, if not sooner. Within the next 3

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months, we will create, on our AAMS website, a survey for the readership of the AAMS to inform us of your needs, complaints and suggestions, which we will take seriously and try to address.

To end, I would like to thank you for your support of the AAMS. I would like to convey my thanks to our past

members of the Editorial Board, who have served the journal faithfully and well, and to express the excitement I feel in working with the new Editorial Board, I will strive to serve the academic needs of the medical community, and increase the international profile of the journal. Your Academy Matters, and so does the journal!

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