

Bonding with IJA: Mission accomplished, lessons learnt and vision ahead

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'The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision'- Helen Keller

The growth of any organisation depends upon the vision and leadership qualities of those managing it. Born in 1953, as the Indian Society of Anaesthesiologists (ISA)'s academic progeny, the Indian Journal of Anaesthesia (IJA) is one such enterprise that has grown steadily through the journey of the ISA and today, it occupies the position of the most coveted and prestigious asset of the ISA. It is a well-known fact that children are born, they grow up observing things, learn from their mistakes, take pleasure in the laurels earned by them and finally become young qualified men and women ready to create their own startups, to adapt and develop newer sustainable technology, to participate in the world of productivity and most importantly to take on the challenges that they will come across in the journey of life. The IJA is one such baby of the ISA which was born, groomed, carefully nurtured and fondly looked after by all its illustrious past Editor-in-Chiefs. It has made remarkable progress in the last 2 years by rising up from rank 56 in 2019 and 42 in 2020 to the current rank of 31 amongst all Anaesthesiology and Pain journals in the world. 'Gentlemen, this is no humbug!' This rise in the academic ranking of the journal is neither a fairy tale thriller nor is it a product of good luck. It is the result of the hard work, dedication, commitment and zeal of all the editorial

team members, the untiring work of several unsung reviewers and the innovative research and scientific work conducted by the many authors of the IJA. The tremendous academic strides achieved by the journal, especially in the last 3 years, are a product of the vision of the immediate past Editor-in-Chief of IJA, the late Dr. Lalit Mehdiratta. A man with extraordinary vision, he had a clear idea about his goals, when in 2020, he embarked on his mission of IJA.^[1] He strove hard to shape up the journal to its present form. His earnest efforts at making the idea of zonal supplements a reality, bore rich fruits and in the last 3 years, starting with the first Northern supplement in August 2020 and the first Central supplement in September 2020, a total of 11 zonal supplements were published. Thus, a new era in zonal academics began in ISA.^[2] The zonal supplements were energisers that lit the academic flames of hope and enthusiasm amongst the publication-thirsty researchers of the respective zones and opened publication avenues for them.^[3] They will without a doubt give a chance for young researchers to join the zonal review and editorial teams and later grow up to become fine and brilliant editors.

The last 3 years have witnessed entirely different hues of research. The period was engulfed by the coronavirus and saw researchers engaged in a hot pursuit to publish research on various aspects of the coronavirus disease (COVID)-19. This resulted in a huge volley of COVID-19 related research articles being

submitted to the IJA, many of which were published. Letters to the editor and clinical communications were more abundant in the initial phase of the pandemic followed by original research in the later phases. It is always believed that the IJA is the academic mouth-piece of the IJA, and this was proven beyond doubts during the COVID-19 pandemic when the COVID-19 advisories and position statements of the ISA were published in quick succession in April and May 2020.^[4,5] The advisory and position statement for the post-COVID-19 surgical patient and Mucormycosis followed suit in April and June 2021, respectively.^[6,7] The COVID-19 advisories received a large number of citations and received global recognition, having been put up on the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA) website. Research in the COVID-19 times, between October 2020 and February 2022, was unique though it was conducted by hasty and anxious researchers in the midst of the lockdown, oxygen shortage and COVID-19 deaths and duties. The IJA team of editors, reviewers and authors did not lose courage during these testing times. It swam hard against the three strong waves of COVID-19, so that every issue of the IJA came online in time. The editing though done from the 'dungeons of the pandemic' brought several interesting articles onto the global academic arena.^[8] Nevertheless, a variety of COVID-19-related articles and guidelines by researchers and societies from all over our country and beyond it were published in IJA in this period.

Speaking about non-COVID-19-related research, a number of articles on a wide array of topics were published. The number of systematic reviews and meta-analyses that are being submitted to the IJA is steadily increasing and this shows that the Indian anaesthesiologists are slowly coming out of their nut-shell of randomised controlled trials, observational studies, case reports and letters to the editor.^[9-11] However, the number and the quality of meta-analyses published in IJA has to improve further and for this, we will have to work harder through many academic and research channels. Furthermore, the quality of original articles submitted to the IJA has to improve further. For this, many Indian anaesthesiologists will have to change their mindsets to consider it their own individual responsibility to submit improved quality of research to IJA. It is often seen that well conducted and written research articles are first submitted to foreign journals and after several years of dilly-dallying in such journals finally get submitted in IJA as a life-saving resort. However, many such manuscripts

get rejected in IJA as the message conveyed through these articles becomes obsolete and loses novelty by the time they are submitted for a possible review. This attitude of the researchers has to change in the coming days. The aim at the individual end of the researcher should be to conduct novel research in the form of robust studies and submit them preferentially to IJA which is the academic pride of our nation. This will improve the quality of research published in IJA and thereby improve its ranking and global image.

The 'all women's' issue of the IJA published in September 2020 was a mark of respect to the female anaesthesiologists of our country and was the first such issue to be published in the world in an Anaesthesiology journal.^[12] Editorials on varied and interesting themes written by a mixed amalgam of editors, academic experts, and reviewers from all parts of our country were the hallmark of all the issues. The postgraduate (PG) issues of January 2021 and 2022 had each article written by a group of experts from different parts of our nation and this helped to improve the exchange of knowledge between academicians from different geographical areas and to improve the rapport between them. The upcoming PG issue of IJA is also based on the theme of recent advances in Anaesthesiology, Critical Care and Pain medicine and is being authored by the eminent scholars from our nation. Each PG issue thus showed the remarkable 'unity of our academic Anaesthesiology community amongst a rich diversity'.^[13]

From the publishers' side too, there were some revolutionary changes. The journal moved to a new manuscript management system in April 2021. This created several technical hurdles for the editors, reviewers and authors, but they were soon sorted out. From August 2021, the journal is also being published on the prestigious OVID and Lippincott Williams and Wilkins (LWW) research platforms.

Our immediate past Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Lalit Mehdiratta had a vision, tangible dreams and a noble mission to accomplish when he took over charge of the journal in December 2019. The vision, his maturity and patience made him work tirelessly and provide an excellent and conducive atmosphere for the editorial team members. The team of associate editors, assistant editors and section editors worked in perfect harmony, with good coordination and scientific accuracy and meticulousness. Nonetheless, this hard work was reflected in the doubling of the Projected Impact

Score of IJA from 0.78 in 2019 and 1.11 in 2020 to the current 1.53. Based on the performance of 2022, a higher ranking and a much higher Projected Impact Score is expected. Considering this, getting the journal indexed in Medline will not be a distant dream.

The passing away of our past Editor-in-Chief Dr. Lalit Mehdiratta in April 2022, did usher in pangs of sadness and despair; however, his vision remained intact and his mission continued to drive the team to carry on and complete the scientific journey unabated. At this point, it would be pertinent to thank Dr. Naveen Malhotra, our forever encouraging and dynamic immediate past-Honorary Secretary ISA National who staunchly supported the journal in his strong hands and Dr. Muralidhar Joshi, the Chairman Academic Committee ISA National who took over the charge of Editor-in-Chief after the passing away of Dr. Lalit. We are sure that the legacy of the IJA will be carried forward gracefully by the incoming Editor-in-Chief Dr. Rakesh Garg and wish him all the very best.

In these last 3 years, we established a bond with the IJA; this bond is special, beautiful and eternal. The mission has been accomplished, academic lessons both good and bitter have been learnt, and we have realised that the vision and goals had been perfect. Nevertheless, it is now time to focus on newer and higher visions for the academic upliftment of the ISA on the global platform and the IJA will serve as a means to achieving this goal. That means, the scientific journey of IJA and the journey of our researchers will continue to chug steadily along the tracks of time.

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