

The world is your oyster!

One of the recent criticisms that the Indian Journal of Ophthalmology (IJO) received was that it appeared to some as though the journal favored manuscripts sent in from abroad over those that were submitted from India. I was equally surprised to hear suggestions from some of our peers that as a policy, The IJO should enforce some sort of a restriction on foreign submissions and that the IJO should promote only Indian research. As I acknowledged, assimilated and analyzed these points, I believe this issue needs to be discussed more at length – hence this editorial.

As the flagship journal of the All India Ophthalmological Society (AIOS), the IJO strives to be the platform of choice for research in India. The annual All India Ophthalmological Conference is undoubtedly the best stage to present original ophthalmic work done in India, and as the natural next step, the publication of presented data in the IJO should follow. With over 16,000 copies printed every month reaching out to ophthalmologists across India, IJO has arguably, the widest reach that any scientific indexed journal in India has. Research from India and data that arises from working with Indian patients should definitely reach Indian clinicians as it is most applicable and useful to them. To enable this process, the IJO has a simple submission website, an open access policy for the online material, a transparent, timely peer review process and no article processing charges; all of which make IJO the ideal journal to publish for Indian researchers. As an incentive, the IJO also has annual awards recognizing the best of Indian ophthalmic literature restricted only to members of AIOS. However, it is not surprising that even researchers and clinicians from abroad find IJO an attractive avenue to publish their work in. Over the past few years, manuscripts submitted from different countries across the globe have increased in number; a logical reflection of this is that the proportion of published papers from foreign authors has also increased.

It is my personal opinion that enforcing any sort of embargo on foreign authors from submitting to the IJO would be detrimental to the journal – both in the short-term and in the long run. As a matter of minutes policy, the nationality of the author(s) does not play any role in deciding whether a paper gets published in the IJO or not. The merit of the scientific data, the validity of the material, the relevance of that data to the reader, and the inputs of the reviewers together decide whether a paper is worth publishing or not. The review process in the IJO is a double blinded process- the reviewer and the authors do not know each other's identities. Therefore, only those manuscripts that pass the ultimate test of peer review find their way into print in the IJO. In fact, on analyzing papers published in IJO in 2015, we found that out of the top four papers that have been cited the most times since their publication, two of them are from India and two of them are from abroad which shows that regardless of the country of origin, ultimately it is only science that matters.^[1-4]

Conversely, the number of papers from India that are now being published in other journals around the world is testament to the high quality of work done in India. No respectable journal would ever enforce any restriction based on nationality, on submissions. Nearly, a third of submissions to the IJO are from abroad. I believe it is due to IJO's increasing credibility and visibility that I have been invited as a Co-ordinator for the World Forum of Ophthalmological Journal Editors program, representing the Asia-Pacific region.

While we are happy that clinicians across the globe submit their work to IJO, we would like to assure our readers that there is no form of any preference given to manuscripts originating from other countries. Quality alone matters if it is good enough; it will get printed; the world is your oyster!

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