

Need for a Journal in Physiotherapy

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Physiotherapy has been a profession of psychomotor skill which was handed over from one generation to the next. Communication or interaction between Physiotherapists all over the world would help in sharing each other's experiences. Information propagation has now become speedy and efficient than ever before. Email, Telephone, Skype, Whatsapp etc... provide direct communication between investigators everywhere around the world. Information today is easily conveyed through the spoken media, in particular; continuing education workshops & International meetings.[1] Here, investigators get an opportunity to communicate face to face and so the question then arises is 'Do we need journals' at all?

Physiotherapy profession has grown by leaps & bounds due to the strong physiologic rationale behind Physiotherapy interventions & their effects. This was possible due to prompt documentation by a number of investigators during their routine clinical practice. This created a sizeable amount of data to be available in the public domain. This helped evidence-based Physiotherapy practice. Journals emerged in the mid-seventeenth century with introduction of electronic media in the twentieth century. The sources of this evidence are many. The spoken media is preferred by the practitioners as they feel they are too busy to spare undivided time to read, learn, critically think and reflect. They thus get ready information without going through the ritual of searching

evidence. However the information generated in such interaction cannot be tested for authenticity and more importantly circulates only within the scientific community. It may thus, not prove to be a good evidence to inform practice especially to a fresh graduate who has not yet developed the skill of analyzing the information before accepting it.

As Velayutham rightly states, "Journals separate truth from a collection of facts. In the world around, oftentimes, what one sees is not what it is! A true clinician seeks wisdom and truth in himself/herself and in what is around. This is exactly where a journal helps and supplements a clinician's quest for perfection." [2] Ethically, every research that happens, regardless of the result it generates, needs to be in the interest of the community, deserves to be published and made available to the community. Journals make these scientific inquiries open to the public at large and not just to the scientific community. Journals are yet the commonest valid and reliable source of this evidence.

A fresh Physiotherapy graduate as a novice should primarily turn to evidence from journals & databases as a valid guide to inform practice to improve their clinical decision making skills and compliment it by attending continuing education workshops and conferences. This would give them wisdom to think critically and not accept blindly what is catered to them. There are a host of journals & databases containing literature relevant to Physiotherapists with very few journals having good impact factor and solely dedicated to Physiotherapy. However, sadly, most need subscription to access

them. Attending continuing education workshops & conferences saves time and money spent in searching evidence & heavy subscription as the relevant articles may not always be published in the same journal, thus necessitating multiple subscriptions. Moreover, a graduating student needs to refer to literature from diverse fields and it becomes economically impossible to subscribe to those many different journals where each journal is dedicated to a particular subject.

Another critical issue is about the low readership of Physiotherapy professionals! After going through a rigorous exercise of getting the work published it would be futile if it is not read by fellow professionals and other curious minds and brought into practice.[2] It is a reality that, the readers are mostly those who either have or are registered for a degree rather than the practitioners. An attempt at increasing the readership among professionals is a challenge today. Open access to literature can greatly increase the readership and is the need of the hour! A new journal should have two important features namely 'open access' and 'Digital object identifier' (DOI).

As mentioned in the Budapest Open Access Initiative "open access" to literature means its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint is on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to

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give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.[2] Open access is beneficial to both, the reader as well as the researcher.

Removing access barrier to literature will accelerate research, enrich education, share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich, make this literature as useful as it can be, and lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge. It abolishes inequality in access to know. The author gets visibility and citation thus increasing the readership and positively affecting impact factor & citation index.[2] Physiotherapists have long being dependent on scientific & medical information from medical journals belonging to fields related to but other than Physiotherapy. Open access journals devoted to Physiotherapy are very few.

Another useful tool is the DOI. The DOI for a document remains fixed over the lifetime of the document, whereas its location and other metadata may change. Referring to an online document by its DOI provides more stable linking than simply using its URL. This user friendly application will surely increase the readership of journals.

“More is less” with respect to new journals with Physiotherapists generating material worth publishing. Also a major change in scientific publishing has taken place because of technology and the web which has transformed article submission (online only), processing (web-based manuscript processing systems), and discovery (search engines and social media). These developments have contributed to new norms including faster peer review and improved access to publications through online open-access journals and online journal archives of older material. The cost of publication is reduced, which was the

prominent barrier to publication.[4]

With the introduction of Research methodology & biostatistics coupled with synopsis writing at UG level and dissertations at PG level, a great deal of research is generated periodically. There is no doubt that new journals may provide visibility and readers to this research. It is our moral responsibility to provide such opportunity to appraise their how-so-ever small contribution to their own field. The educational institutes also favor publication of work as criteria for selection and promotion for the teaching faculty which also dictates a need for more journals to be available. Thus, a journal which has integrative and cross-disciplinary approach, which is open access and provides DOI would always be a welcome.

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