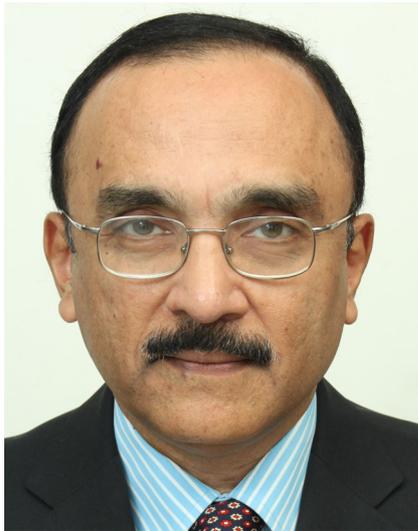


Looking back: The Indian Journal of Gastroenterology 2012–2017

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With this issue of the Journal I step down as Editor-in-Chief of the Indian Journal of Gastroenterology and hand over to a new Editor-in-Chief. When I took up this honorary position at the end of 2012, the task was pretty much clear. Our major aim was to get into the Science Citation Index which was seen as a major quality indicator for the Journal. In order to do this we were advised that we would need to fulfill several criteria before putting in a formal application for inclusion. After reviewing these action items, I prioritized them in the following order:

- Timely publication of the Journal so that the actual date of publication did not exceed the cover date of the journal

- An Editorial Board with wide expertise and significant representation of international subject experts
- A board of peer reviewers drawn from around the world and not just from India
- Clear editorial policies and adherence to timelines for review and decisions
- Improving the quality of the papers published in the Journal

With these aims, I made it my first priority to bring out the Journal on time. Bringing out a Journal on time involves a number of steps only some of which are in the control of the Editor. The first involved shortening the turnaround time on manuscripts, this in turn comprising several steps including frequent reminders to reviewers, ensuring that editorial decisions were made quickly, basic edits to the articles, and rapid review of the proofs once typeset. The turnaround time for each of these steps had to be shortened in order that the whole would be done in a timely manner. Fortunately by the end of one year of editing the Journal we were able to bring it out more or less on time.

Alongside, the Editorial Board was widened and the pool of reviewers was enlarged. One of the issues faced by editors and journals around the world is the increasing reluctance of experts in the field to peer review articles that have been submitted to journals for publication. The problem is increased manifold when the Journal in question is not amongst the most visible journals in the field. This had to be tackled with urgency and on many occasions the peer review had to be obtained through personal connections and requests and through colleagues in the department and institutions where I worked. I am very grateful to all those on the Editorial Board who have provided this support.

Editorial policies and timelines were laid out clearly and are specified on the manuscript submission site of the Journal. Review of these timelines at the meetings of the Editorial Board have consistently shown that the timelines are very short currently. The Journal's performance report for the year 2016 were presented at the most recent Editorial Board

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meeting in December 2017 and are indicative. In 2016, the Journal received 329 articles of which 35% were accepted for publication and 65% were rejected. In the first 10 months of 2017 (January to October 2017) 295 manuscripts were submitted of which 25% were accepted and 75% rejected. In 2016 there were 43,567 article downloads from the Journal's contents, while in the first 10 months of 2017 there were 44,346 article downloads. The average time from submission to the first decision varied year by year and was 20 days in 2014, 31.4 days in 2015, 40.5 days in 2016 and 23.4 days in 2017.

Following efforts by our publisher, Springer Nature, the Journal has been included in the Emerging Sources Citation Index, which is considered now to be the first step for consideration of inclusion in the Science Citation Index. It will now be even more necessary to meet the evaluation criteria that will be applied when the Journal reaches the stage of consideration. These criteria are impact, influence, timeliness, peer review, and geographic representation. We have worked on timelines, peer review and geographic representation. To an extent we have worked on influence by publishing guidelines and position statements of the Indian Society of Gastroenterology (ISG) which we expect to influence practice in India. For instance, the ISG's Consensus Statements on Crohn's Disease in India was the most widely downloaded paper from the Journal with 741 full text downloads in 2016 alone. Although the Journal does not have an official impact

factor, perusal of the Scimago website shows that the cites per doc for 2 years (which is considered equivalent to the impact factor) was 0.73 for the year 2016 (<http://www.scimagojr.com/journalsearch.php?q=28386&tip=sid>, accessed on 25.12.2017). The time has now come to work on increasing the impact factor of the Journal. One of the strategies that has been suggested in order to increase the impact factors is a name change for the Journal, and this has been championed by the incoming Editor-in-Chief.

The task of Editor is not easy particularly when it remains honorary and is carried out in addition to a full time clinical job. I gratefully acknowledge the immense help from Mr. Marian D'Souza, our Managing Editor in the Mumbai office who carried out all the mundane jobs concerning office management, article flow, proofing and assembly of journal issues. The support of the Editorial Board through these times, particularly of those who helped out with manuscript review without hesitation, was invaluable. I also thank the Society who let me run the Journal without let or hindrance. Finally I also wish to thank our publishers, particularly Dr. Naren Aggarwal in the Springer India office, for all their support.

As 2017 ends and the New Year rings in, I welcome and extend my greetings to the new Editor-in-Chief, Professor Uday C Ghoshal. He brings in scholarship and energy to the task and I expect that he will take the next steps to move the Journal forward and upward in the coming years.