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Editorial

Medical Journal Armed Forces India: 75 years young!

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01 Jan 1945, as the World War II clouds were clearing and the Indian Army Medical Corps was barely two years old, the visionaries of the times took on an ambitious, although arduous, task. With a desire to connect to the environment and document the rich medical observations of its members, the *Indian Army Medical Corps Journal* was born.

Started as a biennial, the journal quickly progressed to four issues an year by 1947. The incredible journey to this date has been guided by a number of editors who have toiled against innumerable odds and time constraints to build the foundations of the edifice. The evolution and growth of the journal is a story in itself briefly touched upon earlier.¹ Not many medical journals have survived the onslaught of time, and we are grateful to the patronage of the Armed Forces Medical Services and to all our readers across the world who have supported and egged us on to improve with each passing year. Today, we enter the 75th year with a sense of pride and a rich heritage of 74 glorious years giving us the confidence of taking the journal to newer heights.

In an ever-specialising world, with speciality journals mushrooming everywhere, it is always a challenge to keep the reader interested in the content of a multispeciality journal such as *Medical Journal Armed Forces India* (MJAFI). However, we take it as an opportunity and consider the integration of specialities essential to further medical science as we step out of comfort zones. This is amply highlighted by Rao² in pressing for the clinical microbiologist moving beyond the agar plates in the laboratory and working shoulder to shoulder with clinicians. It is with this in mind that we bring forth the first Platinum Issue, highlighting a theme across specialities and concerning the entire health community—"Infectious diseases".

Infectious diseases remain the bane of the current times, and despite rapid advances in antimicrobials and tools to

track these diseases, newer challenges have emerged humbling mankind. Despite the rise of cardiovascular diseases as a major cause of morbidity in the country, infectious diseases remain widely prevalent and the single largest cause of suffering, especially in the lower socioeconomic strata.³ New threats such as Ebola, Zika and NIPAH virus raise their ugly heads to alarm the human race even as established threats of tuberculosis, HIV, malaria, dengue, influenza, etc, refuse to go away. The United Nations too has focussed on infectious diseases, and the Sustainable Development Goal 3.3 focuses on the elimination of epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other tropical diseases.⁴ The resolve to overcome these maladies by prevention, vaccination and better management tools is reflected in the theme of the current issue.

The importance of infectious diseases cannot be better highlighted than by the reemergence of scrub typhus. A disease well documented in the World War II era and quiescent later raised its ugly head again in the 1990s. In 1945, the very first article in the journal was on scrub typhus.⁵ Later, as MJAFI completed 50 years in 1994, a case report in MJAFI recorded—"The present sporadic case of scrub typhus when viewed with the earlier occurrence of cases in 1990 and 1992 should serve as a warning to us"—scrub typhus was back!⁶ And today, more than three quarters of century past, we are back to where we once were. Look out for a reality check on scrub typhus as an emerging threat in this issue!⁷

Entering 75 years of regular publishing, MJAFI will celebrate 2019 as a Platinum jubilee year. This will be an occasion to reflect, remodel and rededicate us to the challenges ahead.

To improve the quality of the scientific content of any medical journal, a stringent control over quality is necessary and this is fundamental to our growth and improvement. We seek to publish contemporary translational multispeciality research from across the world and present to our readers

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cutting-edge medical developments. Towards this vision, the efforts of the editorial board members drawn from far and near and from various disciplines have been noteworthy and contributed to our growth. But, nothing is complete without the academic zeal of our authors who have regularly entrusted us with their research. With our dynamic growth trajectory, global outreach and robust peer review process, we reassure the potential authors to submit their hard work for a thorough consideration. In the era of predatory journals and other publishing frauds, it is perhaps more imperative that they take the “road less travelled” and publish in established journals.⁸

With a new era comes a new look. MJAFI is rebranding itself with a new logo and cover page. This is to reflect the image of MJAFI gaining appeal across the world as a preferred journal focussing on multispeciality research. The logo displays a fountain pen representing the staff of Asclepius with two serpents entwined around it (Fig. 1). The two serpents also symbolise a double-stranded DNA with bonds between them being depicted in the middle. Chosen after an open online contest, the new logo reflects a balanced amalgamation of traditional and contemporary medical practice. We proudly display our heritage with the date of establishment (1945) reflected in the logo.

The last few years have seen rapid changes in technology and the way medical research is published worldwide. MJAFI has been embracing the new digital world and adopted a fully online manuscript management system since 2011. Taking this further, the journal has taken to social media to improve the worldwide dissemination of information about the research published in the journal. Also, the journal is committed to adopt and implement good practices and guidelines of international medical publishing as we increasingly find ourselves in global positions.

As part of the academic festivities, the journal has instituted an annual MJAFI Platinum Jubilee Oration to honour leading luminaries in medical sciences from across the world. This will offer an opportunity to be inspired by doyens who

have made an impact by their work in health care. The first such oration is being held at Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC), Pune, this year in February, and we eagerly look forward to it.

Also, the best brains among medical editors from across the country will gather in September this year as we gear up to host a national conference of medical editors in AFMC. The conference will focus on burning issues of medical writing, peer reviewing, ethics in publishing, predatory publishing, plagiarism and so on. The conference will benefit not only professionals who have been or are inclined to perform editorial roles in various medical journal but also busy clinicians wanting to publish given the constraints of time and resources. There would be interactive workshops focussed on providing a hands-on learning experience on these aspects. I would encourage all to participate, learn and share the best practices in medical publishing.

Establishment of a gallery is being planned in the campus of the AFMC, Pune, to preserve and showcase the rich history of the journal. It will chronicle the events over a period of time since MJAFI was born and evolved to the current stage. Rare writings including the very first issue will be displayed. Digital archiving of the past issues is in progress.

To quote the commentary by Lt Gen Gordon Wilson CB, CBE, MC, KHS, then Director of Medical Services in India in the inaugural issue of the journal and the Golden Jubilee issue “We have made good beginning but much remains to be done. We are still far short of that goal to which we must constantly aspire, that elusive goal ‘perfection’. To approach this will require the united efforts of all our members, and I am confident that these efforts will be forthcoming in large measures” could not have been more true today as we turn 75.^{1,9}

Yes, we are 75 years young and looking forward to the coming years!

Presenting to you, the first issue of Vol 75.

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Fig. 1 – The logo of Medical Journal Armed Forces India instituted in 2019.