

MCI Challenges to Manuscript Writing and Publishing

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INTRODUCTION

The Medical Council of India (MCI) is the supreme body for advising, monitoring, judging and recognizing the medical education system in the country and practice of the medical professionals including graduates and postgraduates from Indian and foreign universities working in India. It was established in 1934 through the Indian Medical Council Act 1933¹ and gives directives, regulations and frames laws for governing the medical education and service of medical teachers in medical colleges of India.

THE MCI RECOMMENDATIONS

The MCI has been recommending the standards for the appointment and the academic promotion of the teachers in the medical institutions with an aim for uniform standard throughout India. Salient features of its regulations were published in part III, section 4 of the Gazette of India of 5 December 1998 (amended up to 8th June 2017)². The recommendations by

MCI contain information for 45 medical specialties and 24 super specialty subjects.

Recognition as PG teacher and promotions

A medical teacher has to be a postgraduate (PG) teacher with eight years of medical teaching experience out of which at least four years should be as Assistant Professor, along with two research publications in indexed journals, after obtaining PG degree.

An Assistant Professor can be promoted to Associate Professor on publication of two research publications in indexed journals and Associate Professor can be promoted to the post of Professor on publication of four research publications on cumulative basis with minimum two original research publications during the tenure of Associate Professor².

MCI Approved indexing agencies

All the research publications must be published in indexed journals. The MCI

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has approved certain indexing agencies which can be considered for publications. The list of MCI approved indexing agencies are Embase / Excerpta Medica, Index Copernicus, Index Medicus, Medline, PubMed, and Scopus³.

Original research papers

The MCI is too restrictive in terms of research publications. According to MCI only “original research papers” and “original research articles” are to be considered. This point is debatable as many journals publish original research in other sections also, such as short reports and brief communications.⁴

Authorship order

The MCI accepts proof of a research publication only if the author is the first or corresponding author to preclude the gift authorships. This is inequality with the authors / researchers performing group / multi-centric research and also for those performing meta-analysis and systemic reviews. Case reports, letter to editor, reviews have not been given consideration.³

No e-journal

Internet is flooded with information about the medical journals -both e-journals and hard copy journals but the MCI recommendations are that no e-journal will be accepted for the academic promotion.⁵ Many widely popular international journals with high readership are e-journals. There cannot be a clean sweep to deny the credit if one publishes in e-journal. With the increasing cost escalations many hard copy journals are finding it tough to publish and are switching to e-publishing. The Indian Association of Medical Journal Editors

collectively voiced its concern about the MCI guidelines on academic promotions which do not recognize e-journals as accepted publications, in a joint special editorial published in leading Indian journals⁴ but no cognizance has been taken by MCI and the corrective orders are still awaited from MCI.

National v/s international journals

Word India/ Indian/ National do not make a journal of inferior, lesser or poor quality in comparison to the journal having ‘International/ Global/ World’ terms in its name. No proper distinction between national and international journal has been mentioned in the MCI recommendations.

Criticism of current regulations

- All indexing agencies mentioned by MCI for publication of articles have not been included correctly, like the separately mentioned Medline and Index medicus in the list are actually the same.
- The MCI has included search engine like PubMed as indexing database.
- In MCI recommendations the citation indexing has not been given any importance in consideration for academic promotions.
- The MCI guidelines inadvertently encourage the situation where junior researchers, who usually contribute the most, are not given primary authorship. Further, medical research is collaborative and multidisciplinary. An author down the authorship order in a multicentric/group research will not get the consideration as per the current guidelines.

SUGGESTIONS

- The MCI should review the list of indices to ensure that only quality indices are recommended by it.
- The MCI should recommend only databases and not search engines.
- The Citation index should be included.
- All authors should be considered for credits.
- The MCI should adopt more inclusive description of articles reporting original research data or their interpretation in a meta-analysis or systematic review.
- Instead of focusing on publication format and disregarding all e-journals, the MCI could focus on indexing the quality e-journals. Researchers will do well to publish their work in the meantime in an e-journal which additionally provides hard copy.
- The MCI indexing list should be concise, having quality journals, in alphabetical order, transparently available on the journal and MCI site.
- In the current times of non-compartmental integrated medical science, all specialties must have choice to publish in journals of their choice. If the current dictum of MCI is accepted, the world renowned BMJ or JAMA journals, which are not of any specific subject specialty,

will not be considered good enough to be considered by MCI.

- National journals are more relevant to the local diseases and native population. It is proposed that a national indexing body like IndMed be updated and included in the recognized indices.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that the MCI /new governing body to replace MCI will look into the call of editors of Indian medical journals and research scholars and remove the anomalies in current MCI recommendations.

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