



Biomedical Journal Publishing in Yemen: Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

This editorial highlights some of the challenges encountered by medical journal publishing in Yemen, considering the recent launch of many medical journals by academic institutions in the context of war and humanitarian crises over the past few years. Meanwhile, it also presents prospects for enhancing the quality of medical publishing in the country.

Keywords: Medical publishing ■ Medical Journal ■ Yemen



Biomedical publishing refers to the process of disseminating knowledge, research findings, guidelines and best practices in the biomedical field via various printed and digital media, including journals, books and online platforms. The accuracy of medical journalism in reporting medical news and stories via the mass media is mostly unsatisfactory and cannot be used as a basis for evidence in clinical decision making.^(1, 2) Accordingly, peer-reviewed biomedical journals aim to ensure the effective communication of accurate and reliable information to healthcare professionals and biomedical researchers. Publishing in such journals is subject to the quality and ethical standards for the conduct, reporting, editing and publishing of peer-reviewed journal articles, which have been recommended by professional organizations involved in improving biomedical publishing such as the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), the Council of Science Editors (CSE), and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

In recent years, Yemen has witnessed an increase in the number of biomedical journals published by both public and private universities. Such journals have the advantage of making published articles freely and openly accessible, and many do not charge authors for publication. However, many of these journals' editorial and peer review policies are not clear as to whether they follow the guidance and recommendations made by the aforementioned organizations. On the other hand, biomedical publishing in the country is facing a number of challenges as a result of the country's prolonged conflict and economic crises, including a lack of resources, financing and qualified professionals in this field. It is often challenging for researchers in the biomedical and healthcare fields to acquire access to paid online databases that contain the most recent research. In addition to a lack of funds to conduct studies and publish their findings, the poor research culture among Yemeni biomedical professionals exacerbates the country's dearth of published data

related to health and healthcare. Moreover, the limited research infrastructure and lack of resources and expertise required to sustain research activities in Yemeni institutions pose another challenge to biomedical publishing in the country. The unrest in the country over the past few years has also contributed to the cessation of salaries of researchers and a brain drain of biomedical researchers and experts in research and publishing, with many departing the country in search of better opportunities and prospects abroad. As a result, Yemen has been recently listed as one of the six worst Asian countries in terms of medical education research.⁽³⁾ An earlier five-year study revealed that there were 104 medical articles in PubMed linked with Yemeni institutions from 2002 to 2006.⁽⁴⁾ The country's biomedical publishing has also suffered as a result of the war and humanitarian crises. For instance, a review of studies on child health care during wartime from 2014 to 2020 concluded a shortage in literature covering childhood-related topics.⁽⁵⁾

Many Yemeni researchers find it challenging to communicate their research findings in English due to language barriers, in addition to a lack of institutional support for editing and proofreading services. Apart from a lack of governance and regulation in the country for biomedical publishing, insufficient training and capacity building of editorial boards in biomedical journals have a negative impact on the quality and trustworthiness of published articles. Plagiarism in Yemen's biomedical publishing sector may be facilitated by a lack of resources, oversight and regulation, limiting the ability of journals to address copyright infringements and ethical code violations. Editors occasionally lack the knowledge and tools necessary to spot plagiarism or may be less stringent during the review process because of the limited number of submissions. Many researchers with outstanding studies are reluctant to publish their findings in local journals that are not indexed in reputable international databases and do not have any impact factors.



Therefore, indexing local journals must be a long-term goal for biomedical publishers, which necessitates significant efforts to increase the quality and quantity of published articles. On the other hand, a large number of biomedical researchers in the country lack adequate knowledge and awareness of predatory or pseudo-journals, and a significant share of articles authored by Yemeni researchers have been encountered in such journals. It is worth noting that predatory publishing has become a major issue in the biomedical field. Predatory publishers engage in a variety of practices and tactics that infringe copyright and violate scholarly ethics, including making misleading claims about peer review, concealing information about publication fees, falsifying editorial board members, and more.⁽⁶⁾ Authors may be enticed to submit their manuscripts to these journals, especially if they are unaware of the scam nature of emails received from such publishers or if they are eager to get their work published as soon as possible.⁽⁷⁾ Therefore, it is critical to educate researchers about the tools and tactics available to help them avoid predatory journals and publishers.

The aforementioned constraints and difficulties limit the ability of biomedical institutions and publishers in the country to produce biomedical publications of the highest caliber and quantity. Nevertheless, the launch of local biomedical journals is a promising initiative that needs to be further supported by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, as well as national and international donors. Concerted efforts are needed to index local journals in recognized international databases to provide an appropriate publishing venue for researchers from Yemen and elsewhere. Yemeni researchers and publishers need to be educated and provided with the tools and resources they need to produce ethically sound, high-quality publications while avoiding predatory publishing. Meanwhile, there is a need to promote the culture of research and publishing among those working in the healthcare system to

advance evidence-based healthcare and improve health outcomes in the country.

Ethical approval and consent

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest associated with this article.

Funding

Not applicable.

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Abdul-Ghani R. Biomedical journal publishing in Yemen: challenges and prospects. *UST J Med Sci.* 2023;1:1. <https://doi.org/10.59222/ustjms.1.1.E>

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