

INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF PALLIATIVE CARE

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE: XI

INDIAN JOURNAL OF PALLIATIVE CARE

“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose”.

— Zora Neale Hurston (US Writer)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Indian Association of Palliative Care (IIPC) was registered at Ahmedabad, Gujarat on 16 March 1994. The first issue of Indian Journal of Palliative Care (IJPC) was published in 1995 and Dr R A Shah of Gujarat Cancer and Research Institute (GCRI) Ahmedabad was the first Editor. This issue contained important information about IIPC and its Bylaws. It is a matter of pride that; in spite of various difficulties including the scarcity of fund, the IIPC never stopped its publication till date and developed itself as a reputed research publication and became the mouth piece of Palliative Care in India.

2. A Journal is only as good as its Editorial Team and the quality of its reviewers. Hence for the successful running of a journal the first and the foremost important pre-requisite is a competent Editor – in-Chief supported by an Editor and a team of editorial board. In fact, there are some bare minimum requirements which are essential for running a successful journal and ensure its sustainability in the long run. These are Good Quality Manuscripts, Financial Sustainability, Active Editorial Board, Good Quality of Reviewers and Increased Visibility, Indexation in Various Databases and Online Availability and Easy to Use Website

THE ROLE OF IIPC

3. Medical journals have been a staple of the healthcare industry for centuries, playing an important role in advancing patient care and improving health outcomes. As the field of medicine has evolved and grown more complex, so has the role of medical journals. Originally, medical journals were written to provide medical knowledge to a small circle of scholars. Since then, medical journals have undergone significant transformations. The rise of specialization, the emergence of peer review, the impact of digital technology, and the growth of open access publishing are key developments that shaped the advancement of health care. With that view in mind, the role of IIPC include:

- a. To serve as a prominent platform for the publication of scientific, translational, or clinical studies, as well as innovative research.
- b. The IJPC will enable researchers to share their discoveries, explain their methodologies, and disseminate their results in a formal, peer-reviewed manner.
- c. By publishing original articles, IJPC will facilitate the exchange of innovative ideas and new concepts among researchers and practitioners.
- d. IJPC will present articles on new clinical approaches and proofs of concepts, encouraging healthcare professionals to adopt innovative practices within their respective fields.
- e. To enable foster an intellectual environment conducive to innovation, built on robust, proven, and validated evidence.
- f. Discussion of ethical and/or deontological issues.
- g. Discussion of social problems with their medical dimension.
- h. Historical dimension of knowledge preservation (legacy).

EDITORIAL STAFF

4. The Editorial Staff plays an essential role in the progress of the journal. It must be geographically diverse, having members from various regions based on their field of expertise; however, the size of the board may vary from journal to journal. IJPC will have the following staff:

- a. **Editor in Chief:** The Editor-in-Chief is the most senior editor and oversees the entire journal. The Editor-in-Chief guides the overall strategy of the journal and is responsible for all final decisions, the overall quality of the content and the future direction of the journal.
- b. **Editor:** The Editor is the Deputy to the Editor in Chief and his successor. He assists the Editor-in-Chief to devise strategies such as developing journal-related subjects and organizing journal issues.
- c. **Editorial Board:** The Editorial Board is a panel of researchers with expertise in the relevant field. It will have members from different fields of Palliative Care expertise and Editor in Chief will decide about the same. They can be called Section Editors/Academic Editors also. This will be reviewed periodically.

TENURE

5. The tenure of various staff of IJPC is as under:

- a. **Editor in Chief:** Tenure of 3 years which can be extended for second term if He/She desires.

- b. **Editor:** Tenure of 1 year, prior to completion of tenure of Editor in Chief. Thereafter, he/she takes over as Editor in Chief of IJPC.
- c. **Member of Editorial Board:** Maximum 6 years.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

6. Editor in Chief: For the post of Editor in Chief, the Executive Committee of the IAPC has decided in its Mid Term Meeting at Sparsh Hospice, Hyderabad on 12 - 13 July 2025 to follow the rule of Succession Planning. The Editor of IJPC will be identified, selected and developed as new potential leader from within the Editorial Board of IJPC to fill the critical role of Editor in Chief when current Editor in Chief leaves, whether that is due to retirement, resignation, or unexpected circumstances. This process of succession planning aims to ensure that the IJPC can continue to operate unperturbed and achieve its goals even after current Editor in Chief leaves, without any hitch in transitioning from old leadership to new one. Therefore, the eligibility criteria applicable to the Editor also equally apply to the Editor in Chief.

7. Editor: To ensure the highest standards of editorial leadership, the following eligibility criteria are required for candidates applying for the position of Editor IJPC:

a. Mandatory Professional Qualifications:

- i. Medical degree (MD, DNB, or equivalent) in a relevant specialty (Palliative Medicine, Anesthesia, General Medicine, Radiation Oncology, Geriatrics, Psychiatry); preferably with formal training or significant experience in Palliative Care.
- ii. Active, uninterrupted membership of the IAPC for at least 5 years on the date of nomination.

b. Mandatory Academic and Editorial Experience:

- i. The candidate must hold the academic rank of Professor in the specialty of Palliative Medicine
- ii. Preferably, the candidate should have a full time engagement and practice in Palliative Medicine.
- iii. He should be an author of a minimum of five publications in peer-reviewed journals relevant to Palliative Care.
- iv. **Prior experience as an editorial board member for IJPC.**

- v. Certification in Basic Course in Biomedical Research

c. Other Desirable Qualities:

- i. Proven organizational and leadership skills.
- ii. Ability to work collaboratively within a multidisciplinary editorial team.
- iii. No history of scientific misconduct or ethical violations.
- iv. Must demonstrate a strong commitment to scientific integrity, uphold ethical publishing practices, and ensure editorial independence at all times.

8. Member of Editorial Board: Editorial Board Members are young and emerging researchers or scientists who are at the early stage of their careers. This responsibility provides a platform for such researchers to interact with experts in the relevant field. Editorial Board Members are appointed based on the selection criteria like that of an Editor, however, she/he may not be holding the rank of professor in the field of Palliative Care and may not possess prior experience as an editorial board member in a peer-reviewed journal relevant to Palliative Care.

SELECTION PROCESS

9. Announcement and Call for Nomination: The IAPC will formally invite nominations and applications for the position of Editor IJPC or Member of Editorial Board IJPC. The announcement will clearly specify the eligibility criteria and required documents to be submitted. Candidates will be evaluated based on their eligibility criteria, academic and clinical qualifications, contributions to palliative care, publication record, editorial experience, and the alignment of their vision with the journal's mission and values.

10. Final Selection: This will be done as under:

- a. **Editor in Chief:** The Editor of IJPC will take over the role of Editor in Chief when current Editor in Chief leaves, whether that is due to retirement, resignation, or unexpected circumstances.
- b. **Editor:** She/he will be selected by a Selection Committee of 4 members consisting of the President IAPC, Editor in Chief IJPC, One member from Executive Committee of IAPC and an External member from the editorial board of any medical journal selected by the President IAPC. In case of a tie, the President IAPC will have a casting vote.
- c. **Members of Editorial Board:** She/he will be selected by a panel of three members consisting of the President IAPC, Editor in Chief IJPC and the Editor of IJPC.

RESPONSIBILITY OF DIFFERENT ROLES

11. The management of IJPC is a collaborative endeavor between the Editor-in-Chief, Editor and Editorial Board. To ensure efficiency and productivity, the roles and tasks of each member of the editorial team are specifically designated and aligned with their personal expertise. The responsibilities of each role are detailed below in succeeding paragraphs.

12. Editor-in-Chief: The Editor-in-Chief is responsible for all final decision-making related to the journal topics and content, editing, website content, advertising, and relationship building, as well as the future direction of the journal. His position is voluntary and unpaid and may hold a full time position in any academic medical center. The general responsibilities of his role include:

- a. Managing the day-to-day operations of the journal
- b. Deciding on topics, content, and contributors for future issues
- c. Assigning clear roles and responsibilities to all team members
- d. Managing and maintaining regular contact with the editorial board
- e. Managing an efficient peer-review process, alongside the editorial team, to ensure prompt publication
- f. Ensuring that content meets the quality standards of the journal
- g. Ensuring that the content of contributions meets appropriate ethical requirements
- h. Ensuring articles are original and have not been published in other journals
- i. Resolving research integrity problems (e.g. plagiarism or falsification)
- j. Generating ideas to promote the journal and increase readership

13. Editor: This position is voluntary and unpaid, and the Editor may also hold full-time positions at academic medical centers. Editors are recognized individuals in their field of expertise. They pay close attention to the latest advances in research and are well connected with their communities. The general responsibilities of the role include:

- a. Screening manuscripts against submission criteria
- b. Recommending peer reviewers and growing the peer reviewer database
- c. Coordinating the peer review process and ensuring timely publication
- d. Supporting Editors-in-Chief to implement journal policies and any other work suggested by the Editor in Chief.

14. Editorial Board Members: They are experts from various research areas who play an important role in the growth and maturation of the journal, especially in the breadth, depth, and sophistication of its content. Editorial Board Members are an internationally diverse group of recognized clinicians or Palliative Care experts with a strong interest in academic publishing. Editorial Board Members are voluntary and unpaid, and most also hold full-time positions at academic medical centers. The Editorial Board is responsible for:

- a. Identifying new topics for commission or focused issues.
- b. Advising Editor in Chief about the contents of the journal; like feedback on past issues and making suggestions for topics and potential authors.
- c. Providing constructive suggestions to authors; whenever required, regarding article content, structure, clinical relevance, and areas for improvement.
- d. Peer reviewing articles.
- e. Advising the Editor in Chief of Editor on whether a submitted article should be accepted or rejected based on the objective peer review process.
- f. Providing content, whenever required, in the form of occasional editorials and other short articles for IJPC.

GUIDELINES FOR MEDICAL JOURNALS

15. IJPC MUST adhere to guidelines for medical journals in India, in letter and spirit. They are generally being established by regulatory bodies like National Medical Council (NMC), Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) or Clinical Trial Registry (CTRI) etc. IJPC should also follow the guidelines by international bodies like International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) etc. to get international recognition.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

16. It is one of the most important aspects and the Editor in Chief should ensure adequate funding to sustain the long term publication. The IAPC is helping on this aspect; however, it is very important that IJPC becomes self-sufficient very soon. The sources of funding could be through donations, grants from philanthropists, Trusts or Foundations, CSR funds, Government Grants if possible. Subscription generation takes time and even then it does not fetch much funding for sustained growth. However, an important source of income could be through advertisements for which one needs a strong committed Editorial Staff. IJPC is more than three decades old and it has some credibility, readership and improved visibility. Therefore, it will become easier to get funding as suggested above.

17. “Author-pays” Business Model: The central feature of the author-pays model is that in the interval between manuscript acceptance and publication, **article processing charges (APCs)** are payable by the authors or their institutions. This ensures financial sustainability; however, the acceptance of such payments depends also on the publication culture of the IAPC. Should we do it in the IAPC? In any case, we need a proper mechanism about using this business model.

SOP: MANAGEMENT OF IJPC

18. The internal management of IJPC is the responsibility of the Editor in Chief in conjunction with the Editor. Therefore, they should have a proper SOP on its professional governance. This

SOP may include other technical aspects also like Peer Review System, Contents of the Journal, Variety of Contents, Instructions for Authors, Ensuring Transparency, Copy Editing, Print and Online Issues, Recognition by Regulatory Agencies, Indexation in Various Databases and Plagiarism Check. This SOP, when uploaded on the IAPC website, will help young enthusiasts to jump into the world of research and innovation.

MEETINGS

19. The IJPC with its full staff shall meet every year, in person, preferably before or during the Annual Conference of IAPC; the meeting will be presided by the President IAPC. They can have additional online meetings; every quarter or whenever the situation demands, to discuss updates and share views on the development of activities.

REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

20. The SOPs will be reviewed by the Executive Committee of the IAPC every 3 years or earlier if so required, to ensure relevance and effectiveness; proposed changes may be initiated and amended by the Executive Committee of the IAPC.

CONCLUSION

21. The role of medical journal editors in the 21st century is increasingly vital yet associated with challenges. Editors must manage a high volume of submissions while ensuring quality and relevance, often navigating the complexities of varying research standards. The peer review process presents additional hurdles, as securing timely expert reviews can be difficult. Ethical considerations surrounding integrity, transparency, and intellectual property further complicate their responsibilities.

22. Generally, the functioning of the journal is overseen by the Editor in Chief, Editor and the Editorial Board Members, who are eminent and competent researchers in the field, and contribute by inviting contributions and proposing expert opinions on the suitability of submissions.

23. In conclusion, running and managing a good quality journal faced with financial and human resource constraints is not easy. It is quite frustrating and stressful job; however, professional competencies of the Editorial Staff will ensure smooth sailing to a great extent!

“If you think research is expensive, try disease!”

— Mary Lasker (US Health Activist)