Survey of Saudi publications in highest impact medical journals

Hasan Z. Jamjoom, Medical Student, Ammer M. Jamjoom, Medical Student, Abdulhakim B. Jamjoom, FRCS, FRCS (SN).

ABSTRACT

Objectives: The 4 “highest impact medical journals” (HIMJs) and their 2015 impact factors (IF)s are: New England Journal of Medicine (55.8), Lancet (45.2), Journal of the American Medical association (35.3) and British Medical Journal (17.5). The purpose of this study is to evaluate publications in HIMJs that originated from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and to assess the influence of time on their characteristics.

Methods: Using the key word “Saudi Arabia”, an advanced online search was carried out in the web sites of the 4 HIMJs in August 2015. The inclusion criteria were publications in HIMJs during 1985-2015 in which at least one KSA researcher was included in the authorship. The influence of time on the publications’ characteristics was assessed by comparing articles published in the recent 4 years with those published in the other 27 years based on a number of parameters and using a Chi-squared test.

Results: Thirty KSA articles that were published in the HIMJs during 1985-2015. The median IF was 45.2. The annual rates for KSA publications in HIMJs had increased 8 folds in the recent 4 years compared with the other 27 years (4/year versus 0.5/year). Furthermore, publications in recent years had significantly more “major” KSA contribution and more were Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)-related. However, the journal IF, authors number, first author affiliation, international collaboration, research type, and citation numbers were not found to be influenced by the timing of publication.

Conclusion: There has been an encouraging recent upsurge of KSA publications in HIMJs. The increasing ability of KSA researchers to publish articles in HIMJs reflects scientific evolution. However, most of the research had been MERS-related. The paucity of pioneering research in other topics and in the undertaking of trials is indicative of shortage of innovative ideas. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia needs to develop its own elite research minds.