

# Medical Editing Certificate Course: A Welcome Step

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Editor of a medical journal has a great role to play. He is expected to be a leader who drives others by his vision and inspiration. Traditionally in Pakistani context faculty members of a hospital / university or members of professional associations are given task to run a journal. These people usually do not have any background of running a medical journal and this has led to disaster. However in some institutions people with higher postgraduate qualifications and background of research and publications were assigned the task of running a medical journal. They have contributed a lot in this context. They not only set standards but also collaborated with international medical journal editors associations and attended workshops / conferences and seminars to update themselves and also improve quality of medical journals.

Over the years a need for formal education in medical editing has been realized. This approach is still in infancy but appears promising. By getting trained through a structured program, it is expected that in future a more educated and experienced people will join this field and improve quality of publication. Pakistan Association of Medical Editors (PAME) was quite active in this regard and Mr. Shaukat Ali Jawaid, Chief Editor of Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences was instrumental in floating this idea and then ensuring it is actually implemented. Credit goes to General (Retired) Muhammad Aslam, Vice Chancellor of University of Health Sciences (UHS) Lahore at that time who supported well and finally a certificate course in Medical Editing is planned at UHS Lahore. Current Vice Chancellor Prof. Javed Akram also helped in this regard.

The current certificate course is designed in a hybrid model with in-class and online components. It helps those who are pursuing certificate as an additional qualification while still continuing with their original commitments. It has two modules of three months duration each with end of course assessment part. There are clearly defined objectives and course is designed in such a manner that it is aligned with expected outcomes. A good resource material is also provided so as to facilitate the participants. The faculty is from editorial boards of impact factor journals and other senior editors from different medical universities with good research background. This is an ambitious beginning and PAME hopes it will bring a good change in medical journalism in Pakistan. It is important to mention in this context that two regulatory bodies of medical journals in Pakistan, namely Higher Education Commission and Pakistan Medical & Dental Council, failed miserably. Their role remained controversial and discouraging to Pakistani journals. They never even suggested such a move.

Editors are expected to have many traits in addition to having sound academic background. Integrity is the most important trait. It is rightly said that editors have no friends.<sup>1</sup> In a study conducted in 2017, in a consensus statement with 14 core competencies have been described that editors are expected to have.<sup>2</sup> Editors though work part-time, but editing is time-consuming and at times disappointing based upon how casual authors could have been? But in the end it may turned out to be a rewarding endeavour when article takes shape of an evidence based authentic document. Editors therefore, need to be well versed with latest literature and should have good command over English language. Editors must understand policies and scope of a journal including editorial processing from initial submission to final draft after proof reading and its availability on-line and publishing. All these components are addressed in certificate course.

This course is also meant for those who may seek their career in medical journalism. PAME is also planning to

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continue its effort and after first run of certificate course may plan for advanced course that may in future become a complete masters program with a component of research as well.

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