

# Emergence and Evolution of the Journal of Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons: Igniting the Professionalism

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## Abstract:

*Journal of Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (JBCPS), all the go by 'BCPS Journal', is the official organ of BCPS inclusive of academic, extra-academic and official matters. The journal started its journey in August 1983, now in the fourth decades is embedded in the fanfare of Golden Jubilee of BCPS. It commensurate with the fellows' desire that a supplement of the JBCPS shall be published as the official organ of the college on behalf of the education, training, research and publication to Showcase the college image in the academic arena. The special editorial board is tasked to marinate a document of the sojourn of the JBCPS, for now and then. The authors have tried to pick up pieces of information from all available local libraries and online resources to build up an edifice to be added on from time to time. It has been tried to fulfill the mandate through expanded and extended search and find the tenets of the emergence and evolution of the JBCPS with an endeavor to bring out a canvas of the paintings of the stories of the Odyssey. Bangladesh Medical Journal (BMJ) published by*

*Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) is the oldest journal of the country first published 50 years ago in July 1972. Then the Bangladesh Medical Research Council Bulletin (BMRC Bulletin), published in December 1975. JBCPS is the third in this sequence. Prof Golam Rasul was the first editor in chief and so far, fifteen chiefs navigated the journal so far. The first editorial board consisted of five members and present editorial board embracing almost all the subjects including editors from abroad. JBCPS is online since 2004 and is available in the Bangladesh Journals Online (BanglaJOL) since 2006. With Continued relentless untiring efforts of the editorial board and collaboration from the executive committee of BCPS the JBCPS is now one of the top ranked & prestigious peer reviewed journal of the country. The next endeavor shall be to enlist the journal in PubMed which is expected very soon.*

**Key Words:** Medical Journal, Evolution of Journal, History of Medical Journal, Emergence of Journal, BCPS Journal

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## Introduction:

Medical journals are publications that report medical or surgical information to the physicians and surgeons and other health professionals<sup>1</sup>. Scientific journals began in the 17 centuries with the French Journal des Savants and

the British Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society. The journals complemented scientific meetings, which had until then been the main way of communicating science<sup>2</sup>. Medical Journals are documentations that are the bundle of knowledge for all to use.

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### The Goal of a Medical Journal

The main role of the medical journal has always been to contribute to the progress of medical science, from bench to bedside to be rolled to the community and beyond. If we consider the current academic trends, articles are also published so that authors can be benefitted individually like, to attain higher positions in the medical and academic hierarchy, obtain grants or fundings through research projects, can apply for higher education in the credible institutions across the globe, contributing in academic medical publications etc<sup>3,4</sup>. which in turn bring benefits to the institutions where the respective authors work. Based on the quantity and the quality of the publications the institute can get higher international rankings, improved visibility, better funding, larger numbers of tuition-fee paying students, etc. So, research papers remain the most influential means of not only spreading but also generating knowledge, as well as of establishing academic hierarchies at both individual and institutional level<sup>3,5,6</sup>. Quality medical journal is imperative to develop a good scientific generation.

### Methodology

To do historical research, it requires extensive search to the medical records both electronic and hard copies. The authors adopted to search both electronic and printed records between 1 February 2022 and 15 May 2022. Developed the Microsoft Excel sheets to record data. Three medical libraries were included in the study

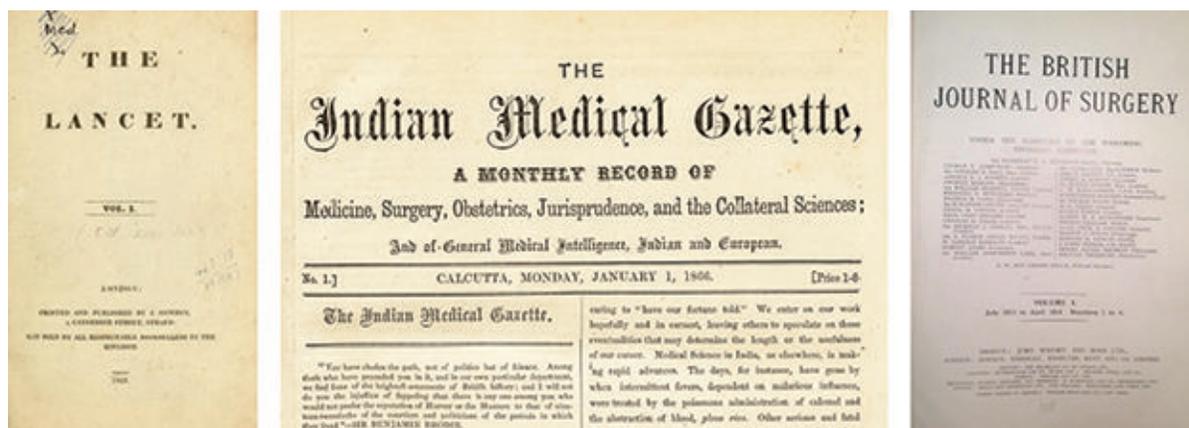
purposively based on the reputation and good track records of authentic record keeping, they are – BCPS Library, BMA Library, Dhaka and The National Health Library of Center for Medical Education, Mohakhali, Dhaka. The electronic journal records from the BCPS Journal website and the BanglaJOL website were evaluated. The records were collected by a third person not related to the study but cross checked by the authors by physical analysis of the printed copies. Digital images and scans were stored for the records. For the historical records the authors searched the old medical journal records from the web and whenever needed contacted the authors of the historical articles. Simple data analysis were done using Microsoft Office package, 2022 license. In addition, personnel communication and collections are tapped as well.

### Looking Back

Its more than a mere change, three decades of the JBCPS is a tedious endeavor of add-on development and growing. To understand the pace of the journal there is need of perceiving the emergence and evolution of medical journals beyond the country domain and its impact within.

#### *The World History and South Asia*

The history of medical journals is rooted with the Edinburgh Medical School and their *Medical Essays and Observations* published beginning with 1731, which then became the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, peer-reviewed since 1733<sup>1,3,4</sup>. Initial interest in case studies



**Fig-1:** Few historical medical journal records, *The Lancet* (left), *Indian Medical Gazette* (middle) and *The British Journal of Surgery* (right). [Source: Internet/ Wellcome Library, UK]

based on the observation of single patient's change. The Lancet first published in 1823 to publish the lectures of London medical schools and case reports written by the medical and surgical faculties. Later, in 1857, the British Medical Journal was launched following the inception of the British Medical Association<sup>3,5,6,7</sup>.

The Indian Medical Gazette is an Indian medical journal established in 1866 considered as the oldest in this sub-continent. In its early days, it was closely associated with the Indian Medical Service and David Boyes Smith was deputy surgeon general of the Indian Medical Service (IMS) appointed as the first editor of the journal<sup>8</sup>.

General medical journals began at the end of the 18th century, and specialist medical journals at the beginning of the 20th century: later in that century came the subspecialty journals<sup>3,7</sup>. The science that underpins medicine is presented in journals, and most journals can point to landmark studies that changed medicine. Yet medical journals often contain poor science<sup>9</sup>.

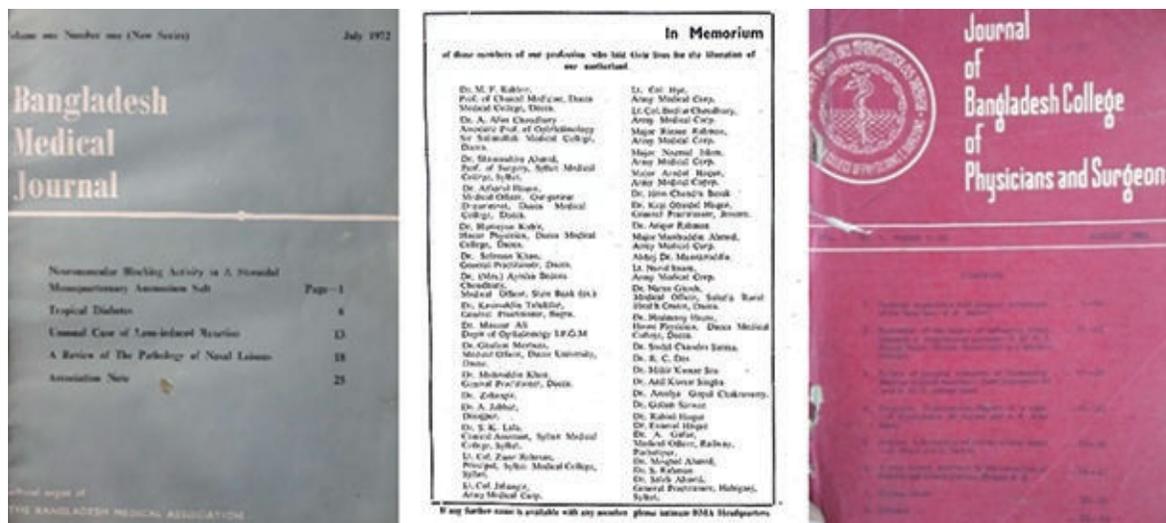
*The History – Bangladeshi Medical Journals and The Pioneer*

Bangladesh Medical Journal (BMJ) published by the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) is the oldest journal of the country first published 50 years back in July 1972 edited by Dr. AQMB Choudhury, four scientific articles were included in the first issue, an editorial and a rare list of doctors who laid their lives for the liberation

war in 1971. Then the Bangladesh Medical Research Council Bulletin (BMRC Bulletin) was published in December 1975. The Journal of Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons popularly known as the 'BCPS Journal' was first published in August 1983. Now it becomes one of Bangladesh's most prestigious clinical and laboratory-based research publications.

*Winds and Waves of Changes in BCPS Journal*

The authors reviewed the archive of the JBCPS to track out the winds of changes through the waves of challenges. In the first volume it had two issues Volume 1, Number 1 was published in August 1983, and it was proudly edited by a five-member editorial board where Prof. Golam Rasul was the first Editor-in-Chief. Other members of the first board were Dr. A K Azad Khan, Dr. K M H S Sirajul Haque, Dr. Nazmun Nahar and Dr. Shafiqul Hoque. The historical first issue contained six articles, college news section and obituary, interestingly no editorial was published in that issue. The second one (volume 1, Number 2) was published in February 1984. At the beginning the year was considered from July to June and two issues per volume per year was continued for eight years till February 1991 when it had published its Volume 8, Number 2. The next issue was named as Volume 9 Issue 1 & 2, and the next issue Volume 9 Number 3. These two issues were published in 1991 too. Then it started to publish according to the calendar year (January to December).

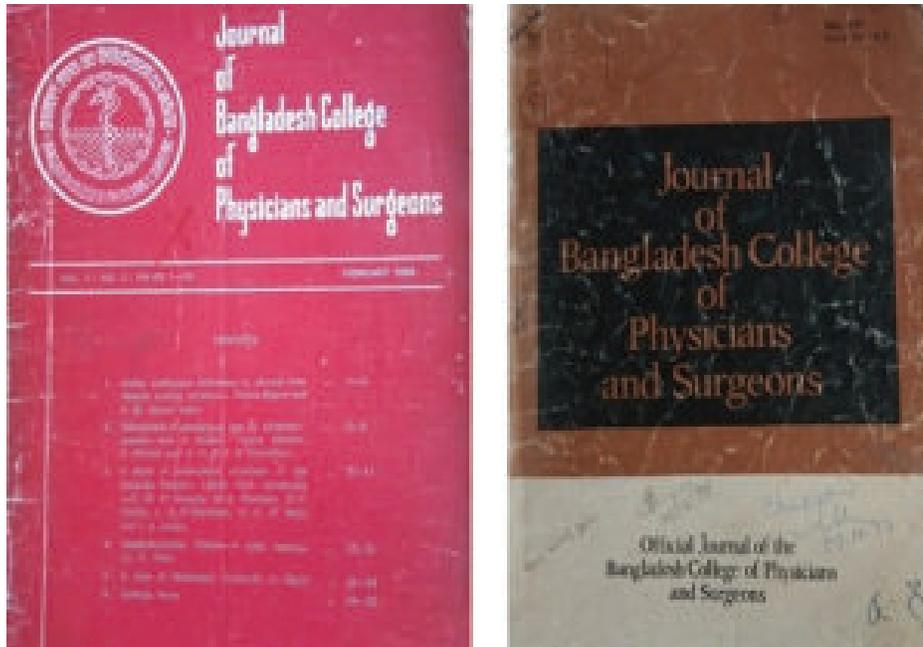


**Fig.-2:** Cover page of the first issue of Bangladesh Medical Journal (left), a rare list of the doctors who laid their lives in the liberation war in 1971 (middle) and the cover page of the first issue of the BCPS Journal (right).

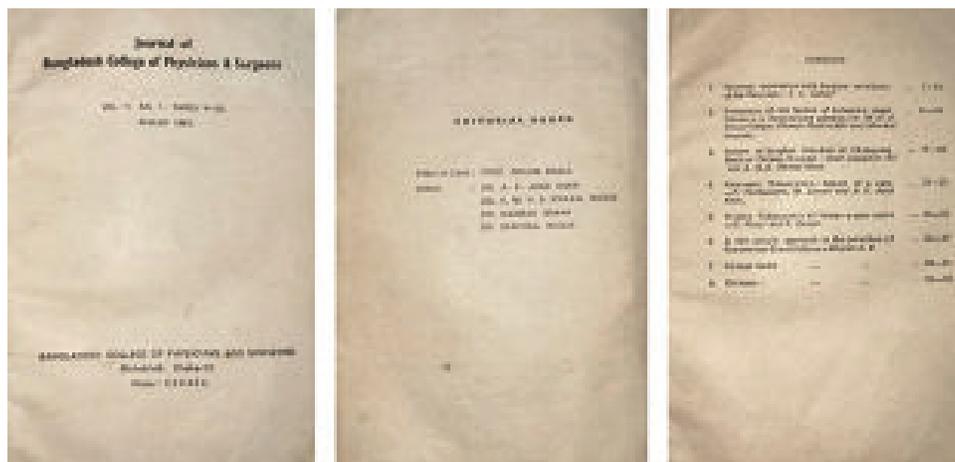
Then the college and the editorial board had decided to publish three issues per year and continued for the next twenty years till 2010. Thereafter in 2011, due to the increased numbers of the articles the board had decided to publish four issues per year to accommodate more articles which is continued till date. First editorial was included in January 1993, volume 11, number 1 and the

title was ‘AIDS and the Bangladesh Surgeon the time for complacency is over’ by Dr. Omar Faruque Yusuf and Dr. MA Majed was the Editor-in-Chief.

The first design of the cover page was also continued but the first design change was adopted in 1991. Latest in 2004, the new design and the concept of the cover was taken place which is continued till date.



**Fig.-3:** Historical wave of changes in the cover page of BCPS Journal: The cover page of the first issue in August 1983 (a); first change in colour & design were taken place in May 1991, volume 9, number 1 (b); new design & colour of the cover was adopted in January 2004 (c).



**Fig.-4:** The first issue of the BCPS Journal – shadow cover page, editorial board and the contents

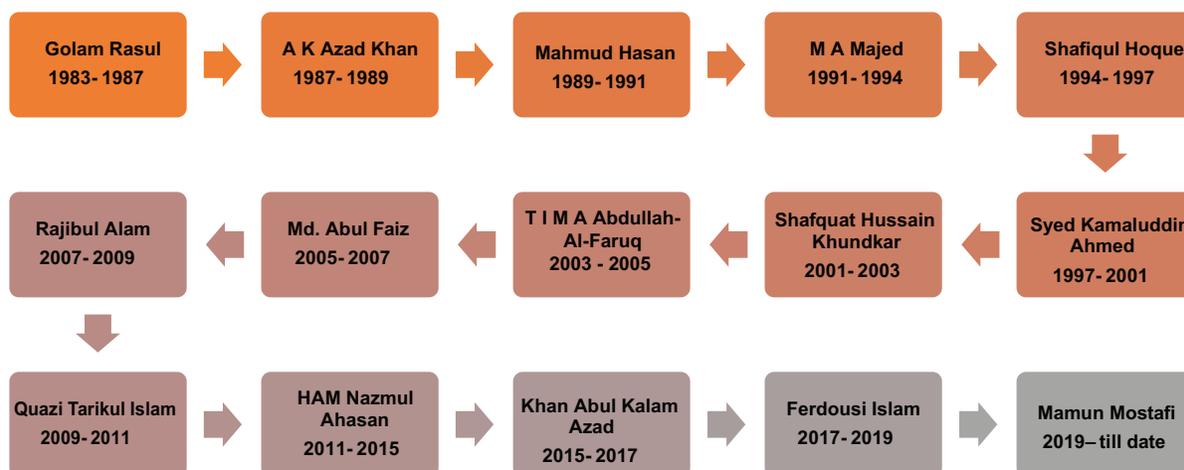


Fig.-5: Editors-in-Chief of the BCPS Journal

Till date, the BCPS Journal was embraced by 15 Editors-in-Chief, a list of them is mentioned in the figure 5. The Editors-in-Chief of the BCPS Journal used to be selected by the college council among the fellows having a track record of editing journals and publication interests, used to be rolled over every two years at a time. If required, the council requests the Editor-in-Chief to continue the tenure for further two years.

#### *Special Supplement*

BCPS Journal always tries to cater the need of the fellows. In that line the first supplement issue was published in the year 2000 on Medical Education. Then another special supplement was published in 2020 - which was the first such issue on COVID 19 pandemic in Bangladesh. This Golden Jubilee Issue is the third in this series.

#### **Current Status:**

In 2021, a new era began with leadership and editorial board changes as the new-generation journal began to take on a new identity. The Journal of Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (JBCPS) is a peer reviewed journal, published four times a year (January, April, July and October). It welcomes original research articles, review articles, case reports, short communications, commentaries, letter to the editor and clinical images from the wide range of medical sciences. Complimentary copies of journal are sent to libraries of all medical and other relevant academic institutions within the country and selected overseas institutions.

#### *Current Board*

The BCPS Journal having two boards – the Editorial Board and the Advisory Board. Each of the board is formed for two years tenure. The Editorial Board is the managing committee of the journal is headed by a chairperson. The main managerial part of the journal is headed by the Editor-in-Chief and consists of a moderate number of members along with an office consists of three temporary staffs. The Editorial Board underwent some changes and adopted two Joint Editors-in-Chief to assist the Editor-in-Chief to complete the mammoth tasks. All the above committee members are voluntarily do their tasks selected among the fellows and members of the college based on their expertise in the field of scholarly publication.

#### *Current Policy/ Aims*

While every effort is always made by the Editorial Board and the members of the Journal Committee to avoid inaccurate or misleading information appearing in, information within the individual article is the responsibility of its author(s). The JBCPS, its Editorial Board and the members of the Journal Committee accept no liability whatsoever for the consequences of any such inaccurate and misleading information, opinion, or statement.

The core aims are to -

- Publish a wide range of clinical and educational material of multi-specialty interest to local and international readership

- Facilitate medical education and disseminate up to date knowledge through the publication of quality original research papers
- Welcome submissions from a wide range of authors (not limited to the Fellows and Members of the College), provided the paper has relevance to a general medical audience
- Promote and enable clinicians and researchers to keep up to date with developments in other specialties, particularly, those which may impact upon their practices

#### *Editorial and Review Process*

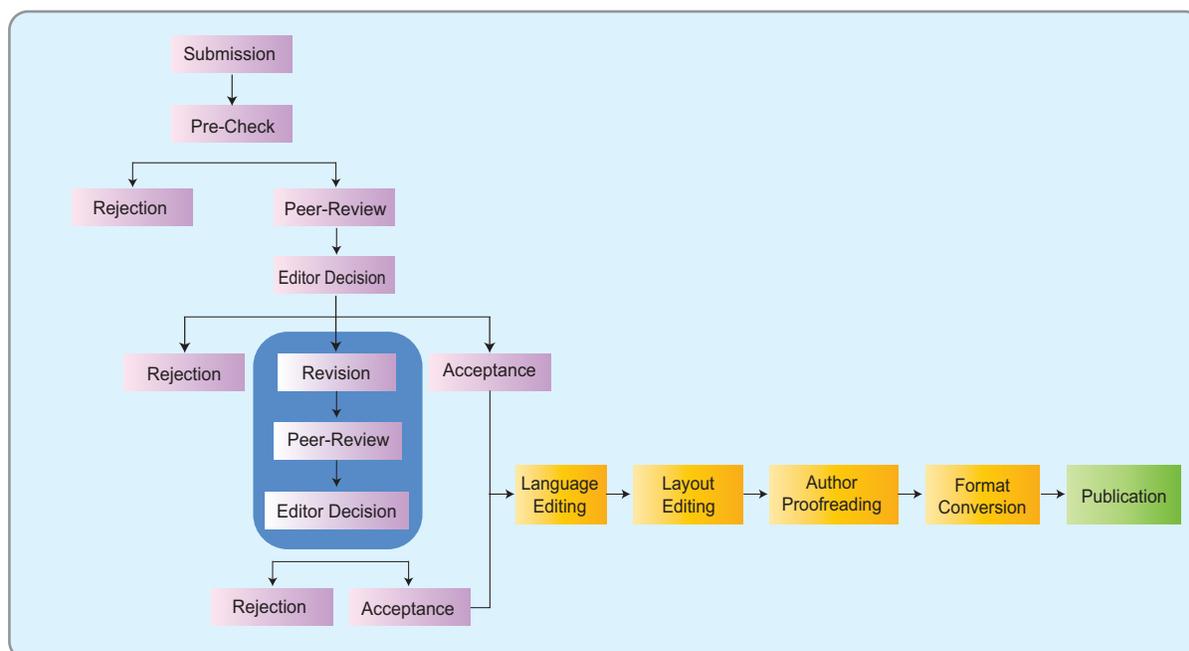
The Editor in Chief or any member of the Editorial Board will review all manuscripts submitted. Manuscripts containing materials of insufficient scientific merit or of a priority issue, or those that do not meet the requirements for publication, may be rejected or returned to the author(s) for resubmission with necessary changes to fit one of the submission categories. Manuscripts that meet the criteria according to the Journal's style and are deemed appropriate for consideration are sent out for peer review. Submissions that the reviewer deems eligible for publishing may require revisions or alterations before being published.

The ability of the evaluated and revised/modified contribution to be published is ultimately decided by the Editorial Board. The author(s) may be issued a proof of an accepted work, which must be amended and submitted to the editorial office within one week. At this time, no changes to the manuscript will be considered.

#### **Synopsis on Publication**

It has a rapidly growing national and international readership. It showcases the most cutting-edge clinical and laboratory research in a variety of medical fields, as well as a forum for medical scientists to share their experiences in order to help others deliver better patient care.

Till date, up to April 2022, volume 40, issue 2, it has published a total of 1212 articles since the first issue in August 1983. The short synopsis of the journal was made by the authors of this article: total 40 volumes published till 2022 consisted of 123 issues including two special supplements. Out of 1212 articles, 565 were original articles followed by 138 reviews, 316 case reports, 114 editorials, 37 images in medical practice, 36 letter to the editor and 6 others on different issues. The analysis of the published articles were plotted in the Figure 7 and 8.



**Fig.-6:** Current editorial process of BCPS Journal

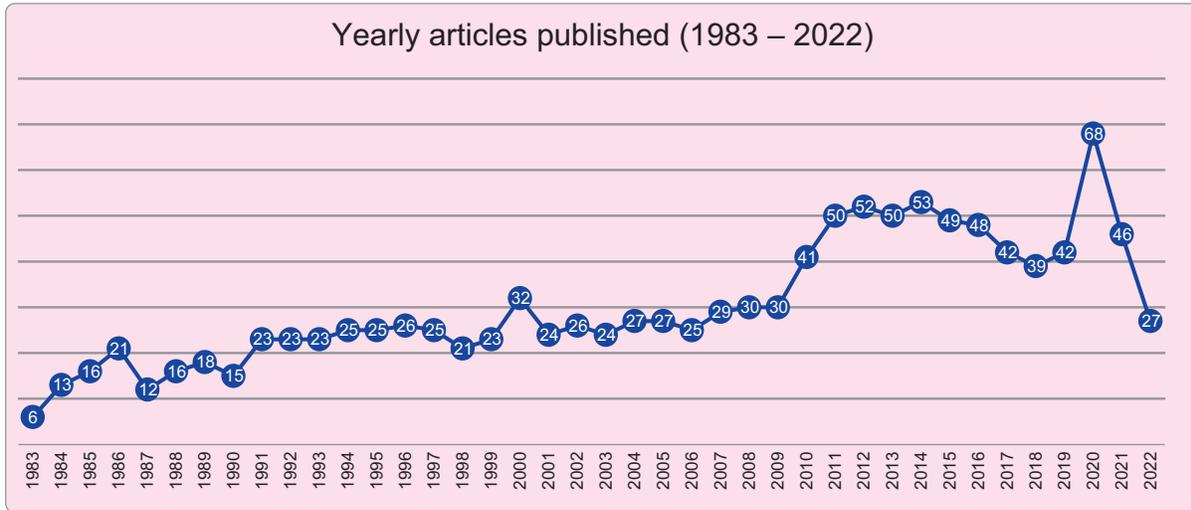


Fig.-7: Number of articles published - year by year (1983 - 2022)

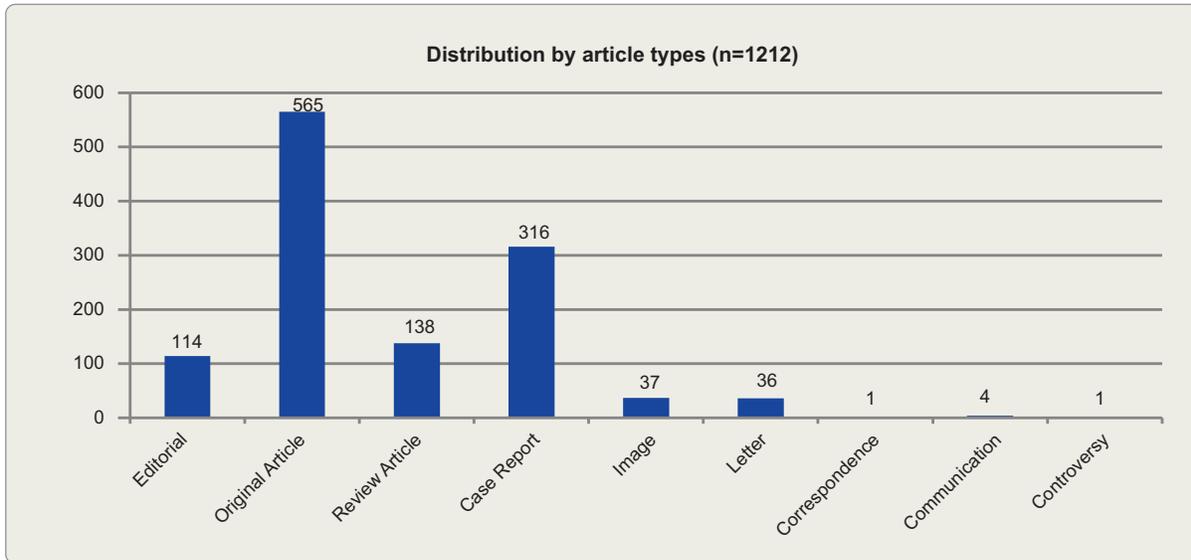


Fig.-8: Articles categories (1983 - 2022)

The authors analyzed the published articles in different perspectives. It was remarkable finding that a commendable number of articles been published by the female doctors comprises almost one third of all (375, 31%). In 2016, 2017 and 2018- female doctors lead the list with highest number of articles published and narrowed down the gap. On the other hand, the

readership is increasing day by day including the international acceptance. It was evident that authors from over twenty countries from different continents published their articles in the BCPS Journal since the first issue in August 1983. Total 46 articles were published from the overseas authors.

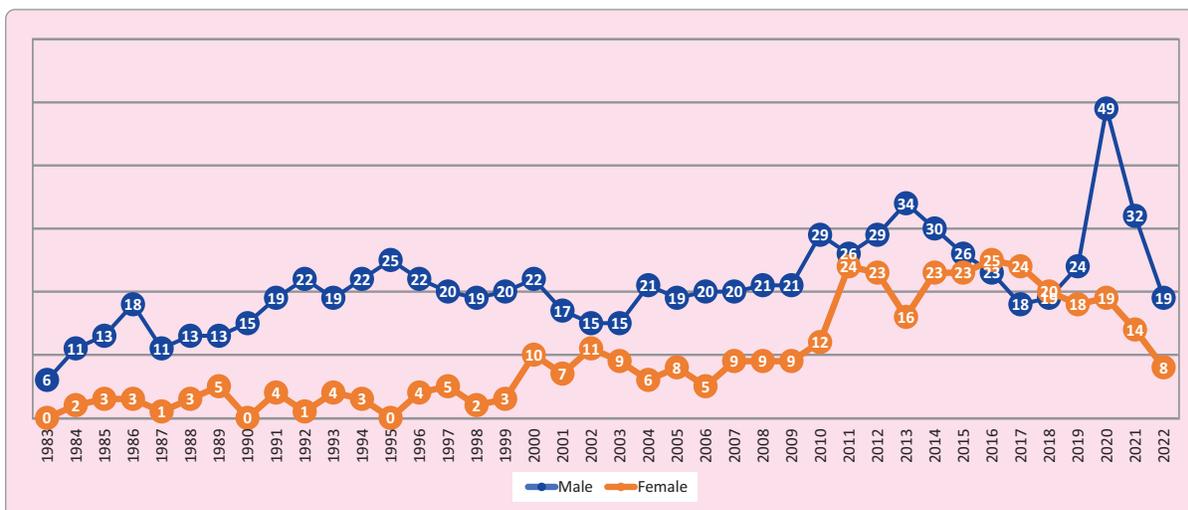


Fig.-9: Number of articles published categorized by gender (1983 - 2022)

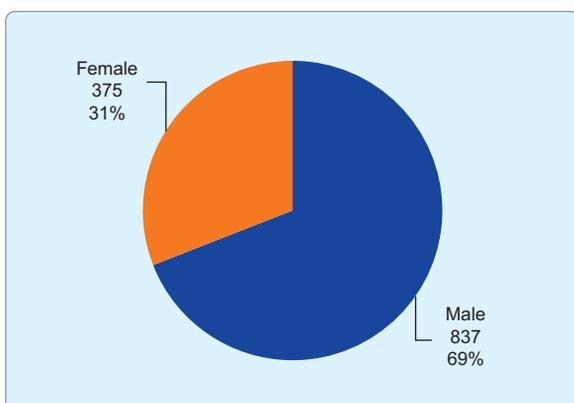


Fig.-10: Distribution by gender (n=1212)

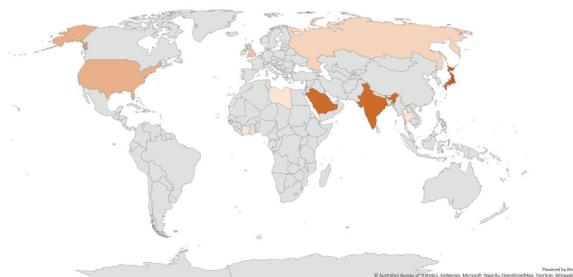


Fig.-11: Articles from the overseas countries shown in the world map

**Pains and Perils**

a) Across the globe the Editorial Boards are now proving to be overworked, under-resourced, and insufficiently skilled – Bangladesh is not different from it<sup>9,10</sup>.

- b) Medical journals have also been poor at ensuring the ethical acceptability of what they are publish— often failing to ensure that research has had approval from research ethics committees and plagiarism. It is important that the committees and journals might work more creatively together<sup>9,10</sup>.
- c) Plagiarism is a big issue now a days. Due to the high price of the softwares, it is difficult to procure annual subscriptions by the journals of LMICs. BCPS Journal is still in need of a good plagiarism checker, which is currently based on personal subscriptions and voluntary offer by some of the editors.
- d) Scarcity of quality articles and research works are another challenge. Yet medical journals often contain poor science due to lack of good research and researchers. However, the exponential increase in number of journals in Bangladesh poses more risk due to the lack of quality editing process. People are less interested in submitting into the quality journals where rigorous review is done<sup>9,10</sup>.
- e) The journals conduct peer review, but this is a process that adds little value. The unavailability of quality reviewers or the commitment are the biggest challenges. Peer review - asking peers of the authors of scientific studies to review the studies critically before publication and this is the process

that is supposed to ensure the scientific quality of journals. It is a sacred process and the phrase 'peer reviewed journal' is supposed to guarantee quality. But clearly peer review is deficient<sup>9,10,11</sup>.

- f) The coronavirus outbreak is a novel, uncharted situation that has completely changed the everyday lives. JBCPS had published their journal in the COVID era regularly. The editorial board had arranged regular online zoom meeting to publish their issues on time.

### Looking Forth:

'Change is inevitable, growth is optional'

—John C. Maxwell

The world is ever changing and the things around us continues to change, and thus true for BCPS Journal in its evolutionary journey<sup>9</sup>. We will highlight some of the refinements as well as more changes yet to come.

### Increase Impact Factor

The impact factor of a journal is commonly used as one of the best and popular metrics of journal quality. The primary aim of BCPS journal should be to become a high-quality journal. If the scientific quality and the visibility of the articles increase, the impact factor will rise accordingly. The following approaches can help BCPS journal to increase the quality of it and thereby the impact factor: attract quality manuscripts, good editorial work, increase visibility of the journal trustful cooperation with owner & publisher<sup>11</sup>.

### Improvement of Editorial Work

BCPS journal can be high-quality journal through appropriate editorial processes and publishing high-quality, ethical articles. Editorial work of BCPS can be further improved with providing an objective review process; having a low acceptance rate; working promptly; providing good professional English editing; providing a statistical review; continuing the education of editors, authors, and reviewers; and following major international editor associations.

### International Reviewer Involvement

A strong editorial board including appropriate international reviewers who are eminent scholars in the field will play a key role in taking BCPS journal to heights of success. When a group of famous academics come together or become a part of JBCPS, they will bring their

credibility and reputation to the editorial and review process of the journal. The journal has a rich panel of national reviewers and has included reviewers from North America, Europe and South-East Asia (Figure 12) and willing to incorporate more into the list in the coming years.



**Fig.-12:** Reviewers by country

### Build a Journal for Modern Readers

One common mindset that still plagues the scientific publishing is the idea to think about online journals like the traditional print journal production. BCPS journal must emphasize a modern web presence and convenient online browsing experience. To improve the discovery and reach of the articles, create categories on BCPS website and make sure that the articles will be easily searchable.

Invited Articles Series can be introduced based on "Editor's Perspectives" reflects important concepts and practical issues our fellows face in their professional and personal lives. Future articles will focus on observation, the art of questioning, and how to run a meeting, creativity, art of scientific presentation and research.

### Expand the Scope

A scientific journal based on specific topics can get more targeted traffic which can increase citations and BCPS journal can follow this strategy. Make sure that the title and the scope are descriptive and intuitive for readers and potential authors. The scope should clearly state the type of manuscripts, topics, and formats that are welcome. Allowing authors to submit their manuscripts in a variety of formats can attract more submissions.

Letter to the Editor section is always underrated and got least attention - practically speaking, there will be

fewer articles are received in this section. The articles published are meant to further educate the readers on interesting or controversial articles that stimulate scientific discussion as well as dissemination of the journal for more readership and citation.

#### *Promote Published Articles*

An editor's job should not end once an article is published. Promote the articles to increase awareness, attract citations, and improve usage. Invest time and effort into a marketing mechanism that works for publicity of BCPS journal. Increasing the readership and citation is the key to any journal as well as very important for an author. Without citation, one cannot improve the H-index, Citation index and other parameters indicating the readership.

#### *Publish more Review Articles*

Comprehensive review articles attract a high number of readers and citations. Active recruitment of review articles may be required, but in many cases, review articles are more heavily cited than the original articles.

#### *Shorten the Review Process*

Fresh and recent studies are more likely to be cited than outdated articles. We need to make sure the review process works efficiently – shorter turnaround times tend to attract more article submissions.

#### *Get Indexed*

Try to get BCPS journal included in several niche indices to increase its rank. These give more weight to content quality rather than publishing history. These are the best way to get BCPS Journal discovered by target readers. High-quality peer-reviewed content, consistent publishing history, and a strong editorial board are essential for inclusion. JBCPS has planned to index in Pubmed, Index Medicus, and Citation Index in near future. We have planned to develop a website and revised editor panels with national and international advisory body.

#### *Smart Editorial Process*

The current editorial board is keen to improve the editorial process to reduce the process time, quality review, track record, quality article, improving the standard and a smooth error free process. To continue the indexing and worldwide readership, it is pivotal to incorporate online/electronic manuscript submission, online review,

electronic management system and online hosting for international visibility. The big challenge shall be to recruit a paid 'Managing Editor', a team in the editorial office and a dynamic independent web portal<sup>11</sup>.

#### **Journal Ranking to be done**

A medical journal is an exposition of add-on knowledge for sharing and usage. The credibility of a journal now a days is measured by some agreed upon benchmarks, and scoring. These are- impact factor, citation counts, citation half-life, immediacy index etc. Based on these ranking of a journal is done. So far endeavor of measuring these were neither done nor asked for. Even BMRC the national agency for indexing medical journals has never attempted for ranking of journals and not to speak of linking with agencies abroad. In addition, NHL&DC has not picked up this for practice<sup>9,11</sup>. This deficit of JBCPS should be done through creating its own way out by BCPS.

Pledge from the current editorial board, publication committee, college council and the fellows - the future of the Journal promises an expanding presence from our young physicians and surgeons, no matter being a fellow or not, to advance with the times and meet the needs of our younger professionals as well as our older fellow physicians and surgeons.

#### **Conclusion:**

The College now is a large assembly of about 10,000 Fellows and Members. The JBCPS owe their progress over the years to this clan of kindred spirits. As the Journal starts its two-score year of its existence, there is no way other than congratulating each one of them on this fascinating endeavor. The college council expects that their contributions as authors, reviewers, editors, editorial staffs and the flag bearers of the JBCPS continues to grow.

The emergence, evolution and rolling of changes - these novel ideas come from authors, reviewers and editors. It has been said that the secret of change is to focus all the energy to build the new and fighting the old. Change is inevitable but the growth of the JBCPS is entirely up to all of us working for the journal, in many capacities as a mission of exposing the add-on knowledge, in other worlds building the science. But we should not forget – 'Respect and remember who we are, where we have come from, and embrace the future'.

Let us reflect Tagore, 'Ever I am restless, I am athirst for the far'.

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### References (and Further Readings)

The authors have left majority references out of this article and used a few, but the statements which were made by the authors are fully referenced in the relevant articles and chapters. Furthermore, many of the issues covered here were collected from the previous issues of the JBCPS and meeting proceedings.

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