

# Encouraging curricular research: A new agenda for *IJDVL*

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2017 has been a wonderful academic year for *IJDVL*. As the InCites database was published by the Clarivate Analytics (previously published by Thomson Reuters), the journal metrics showed a substantial rise in all indices for the year 2016 compared to the preceding year or the previous five years. The journal impact factor was 1.948, an impressive 31% growth over the previous year (1.488). The rise in the 5-year impact factor was even more significant – a more than 36% increase to 1.918 over the previous figure of 1.409. That a large measure of such a performance was driven by recently published articles was borne by a spectacular rise in another index, the immediacy index, which was 0.74, a 184% rise over the previous year's figure of 0.26. The rising importance of the journal in the scientific community was underscored by a rise in the Eigenfactor and article influence scores as well, a rise of 1.2% and 20%, respectively. As an outcome of all these upward trends in the journal indices, *IJDVL* now stands head and shoulders above all other biomedical journals published from India, a feat not only the journal, but the entire dermatology community in this country, should be proud of.

Statistics do tell the truth, at least sometimes. Though we acknowledge the limitations of the above-mentioned parameters and are quite aware that individually each of these scores and indices represent only a partial truth, taken as a whole these do paint a picture which we cannot but notice. That *IJDVL* is now a vehicle for good quality research in dermatology is reflected by these facts and figures. Another heartening fact is the increasing number of indigenous research finding its way on to the pages of the journal. It is our firm belief that, in the ultimate analysis, a national specialty journal is only as good as the research environment of its own soil. Though this journal cherishes and attracts a lot of high quality research from overseas contributors, it is equally aware that sustaining the upward curve in the parameters cited above is critically dependent upon publishing an increasing number of good research material generated from India.

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In this regard, one of the concerns has been an asymmetric distribution of academic institutions contributing articles published in this journal, in particular, among the original research articles. There are several reasons for this. We have to acknowledge that the logistic and financial support as well as the infrastructural environment for research is woefully inadequate in a large majority of our academic institutions. The prevailing academic atmosphere often poses insurmountable deterrents for carrying out any kind of research activity at all. Another important inadequacy is that a large majority of the faculty in our academic establishments do not have sufficient exposure to modern research methods or the rudiments of statistical analysis of research data. Consequently, independent and scientifically valid design of quality studies is hard to come by. In an environment of large-scale disincentive toward research in the academic institutions, the only driving forces are mandate and coercion. The example of the former is the submission of dissertations as an essential requirement for obtaining postgraduate degrees as mandated by the Medical Council of India (MCI) and the National Board of Examinations. The requirement of original research publications for job promotion of medical teachers may be termed a coercive measure. But research under duress without sorting out any of the infrastructural, financial, or academic deficiencies can, at best, produce only half-baked effects in the form of mostly inferior quality research designs and outputs, as is happening now.

*IJDVL* acknowledges the problems in the ecology of research on its home turf. Having done that, it has chosen not to take an ivory tower view of the same but actually engage itself, within its limited capability, to try and offer some small incentives towards good quality research, something that is currently lacking.

## Research: Where We Are

There is enormous scope for research in dermatology as commensurate with our colossal population, we have huge cohorts of cases suffering from diverse skin diseases waiting to be studied scientifically. The immense diversity of the genetic pool, located in widely different geographic areas with a variety of environmental conditions, can provide enormous opportunity for research.

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There is a paucity of Indian data on epidemiological, clinical, and applied aspects of many dermatologic conditions, thus, while writing scientific reports, one is compelled to use foreign data as references which might not have relevance to our clinical scenario. Quality research papers are scarcely submitted for publication because of lack of meticulous data keeping and maintenance of data registry.

### How to Begin

#### There are goldmines of data, explore them!

Doing clinical research is not difficult. Start keeping data in structured clinical record forms. Data well collected and documented can be analyzed and submitted for publication. Photo documentation is important and current availability of high resolution handy cameras has made it quite easy. Ethical considerations are to be kept in mind, and obtaining permission of the Institutional Ethics Committee prior to initiation of any research is mandatory.

### IADVL Initiative

The Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists (IADVL) has been conducting research methodology and “how to publish” workshops to orient our members and address their doubts regarding these issues. We look for takers who can facilitate organizing such workshops.

We encourage IADVL members to come forward in greater numbers to contribute to research and publication.

### What is the Need for Publication?

The aphorism “publish or perish” is appropriate in the current scenario where the statutory body controlling medical education, namely the Medical Council of India, has mandated requisite number of publications for furtherance of an individual’s academic career.

### Publications Needed for Entry and Promotion in Academic Career

A total of four publications of original research studies in printed indexed journals are mandatory. After joining as an assistant professor, two publications are required for subsequent promotion as an associate professor and for recognition as a postgraduate teacher. Further, two publications are a prerequisite for promotion from associate professor to a professor.<sup>[1]</sup> Though presently publication is not mandatory to join entry level teaching position (assistant professor), publications are an important criterion in candidate selection during any competitive recruitment process.

### Publications are Essential for Furtherance of Your Career Through IADVL

1. IADVL has instituted several fellowships, scholarships (for national and international conferences), observerships, and funded research projects. Weightage is given to the number of publications of the candidate applying for any of the above
2. Similarly, a grant of Rs 1 lakh is funded for international dermatopathology fellowship and publications can help strengthen one’s claim for selection
3. IADVL comes out with many publications like book projects, and while applying for editorship or authorship, publications in the chosen subject are needed

4. Selection for the membership of IADVL Academy or any of the Special Interest Groups also requires publications
5. While selecting editors for the *IJDVL* or the *Indian Dermatology Open Journal (IDOJ)* and the Chair or the Convener of IADVL Academy, publications are of immense importance.

Publications in high quality journals provide an objective evidence of the merit of a candidate.

### Publication - The Need of the Hour

Number of postgraduate (PG) Dermatology seats available in India: 220 medical institutes offer 686 MD (Dermatology, Venereology, Leprosy) seats and 85 institutes offer 130 Diploma in Dermatology, Venereology, Leprosy (DDVL) seats in dermatology.<sup>[2]</sup>

In addition, 13 seats are available for primary Diplomates of National Board (DNB) under institutes recognized by the National Board of Examination.<sup>[3]</sup> It is desirable that all PG residents publish one paper (may be based on their thesis) during their study so that they can uplift their merit and apply for teaching jobs as well as IADVL fellowships, observerships, etc.

Every year, 829 residents embark on post-graduate study and there may be an equal number or more dermatologists engaged in teaching at various institutes.

Practicing IADVL members also need publications so that they become eligible to join the Academy as well as SIGs and can build up their credential to take advantage of various academic activities. Therefore, it is obvious that, in the current scenario, postgraduate students, postgraduate teachers, and practicing dermatologists all need publication.

### Publication Platform - Where do we Stand?

We have two journals, *IJDVL* and *IDOJ*, being published by the IADVL. There are other indexed Indian dermatology journals like the *Indian Journal of Dermatology (IJD)*, the *Journal of Cutaneous and Aesthetic Surgery (JCAS)*, or the *Indian Journal of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS (IJSTD)* but the number of publication platforms is not commensurate with the enormous publication needs.

### IADVL Initiative

1. IADVL PG thesis award – Every year 3 prizes are awarded for best thesis.
2. PG thesis based award paper session at CUTICON, DERMAZONE, DERMACON – From the current year, a PG thesis-based award paper session is to be initiated. The unique feature of this session is that the selected PG as well as the teacher will get a prize and a certificate each.

### IADVL-IJDVL Initiative – Initiation of PG Thesis Based Original Article Section in IJDVL

There is a gap between publication demand and publication platform. To address this and to encourage our members to come forward for publication, we are pleased to inform that now *IJDVL* is starting a section on PG thesis-based original articles. Applications will be invited in prescribed format, and all those articles published as original articles after going through the regular peer-review process of this journal will find their place as Award Articles.

### Award Article section in *IJDVL*

#### Unique features

*IJDVL* has other awards but this is to attract and encourage PGs and their teachers to submit to our journal their best research work.

This new award category aims to showcase quality research that is being carried out as part of curricular research in the postgraduate training programs of our speciality in this country.

Any research work based upon the dissertation of a postgraduate student and certified by the teacher as such, and accepted as an original article through the regular peer-review process of *IJDVL* will be published as an Award Article.

Both the students and teachers will be given cash awards and certificates and will be felicitated during DERMACON.

Acknowledge both the students and teachers as having equally important contribution in generating high quality study.

Success will motivate students to keep their interest in research alive, and encourage teachers to keep the focus on carrying out high quality studies in future.

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### Announcement

#### **ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE IJDVL-IADVL AWARD FOR PUBLICATION OF ORIGINAL ARTICLE IN *IJDVL* BASED ON DISSERTATION/THESIS**

This is a new award designed to incentivize and acknowledge high quality curricular research done as part of the postgraduate academic training programmes.

Any article, meeting the following criteria, that is submitted in the original article category in *IJDVL* and published/accepted for publication as such, will be eligible for the Award. It is clarified that such submissions eventually published as any other article type (brief report, letter to editor, net study or net letter) will not be eligible for this award.

#### **Criteria**

- The article has to be based upon the dissertation undertaken by the first author.
- The article has to be accompanied by a declaration by the guide/supervisor that it is based upon the dissertation done by the first author.
- The guide/supervisor and all the co-guides/co-supervisors are to be made co-authors.
- The article has to be submitted the same year or the calendar year immediately after the one in which the first author has appeared or is scheduled to appear in the MD/DNB examination.
- There must be an acknowledgment at the end of the article specifying the dissertation name, name of the Institute where the dissertation was done and names of the guide/supervisor and co-guides/co-supervisors under whom the study was undertaken.

There will be no cut-off dates for consideration for this award. The articles accepted for publication as original articles through the regular peer-review process of the journal, and meeting the above criteria will be showcased in a new section titled 'Award Articles'. The awardees are to be felicitated along with a certificate and a cash award of Rs 10,000/- each for the first author and the guide in the DERMACON immediately following the acceptance or publication of the articles.