

IJDVL: Journey of a journal

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As we celebrate this Golden Jubilee year of the Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists (IADVL), it is worth recounting the interesting past of the *Indian Journal of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprology (IJDVL)*, the flagship journal of the IADVL.

The origin of this journal goes back much further than that of the Association. It is also no coincidence that the foundations of both the institutions owed a great deal to a single remarkable individual. It all started when Dr UB Narayan Rao founded a journal named the *Indian Journal of Venereal Diseases (IJVD)* singlehandedly in the year 1935 from Bombay (now Mumbai).¹ Dr Rao was a busy general practitioner in that city, who adopted venereal diseases and dermatology as his speciality. A pioneering personality with great foresight and institution-building abilities, he was also a prolific writer who developed contacts across the world and sought contributions for his journal.¹

Dr Rao changed the name of the journal to *Indian Journal of Venereal Diseases and Dermatology (IJVDD)* in 1940, presumably to reflect the increasing importance of dermatology as a speciality.² In February 1947, he took the initiative of forming the Indian Association of Dermatologists and Venereologists (IADV).³ In the second All India Conference of the IADV, held in April 1951, Dr Rao magnanimously proposed to make *IJVDD*, his own journal, as the official organ of the Association.⁴

After prolonged parleys, the official journal was published in June 1955 with a new title, the *Indian Journal of Dermatology and Venereology (IJDV)*, with Dr RV Rajam of Madras and Dr Ganapati Panja of Calcutta as Editors-in-Chief of venereology and dermatology respectively, and Dr UB Narayan Rao as the Managing Editor of the new journal. This regime of shared responsibilities continued till the demise of Dr Narayan Rao in 1960. The editorial collaborators at

that time were James Fernandez, WA Welinkar and SC Desai from Bombay, P Natesan and PN Rangiah from Madras and BN Banerjee and Major S. Ghosh from Kolkata.¹

Dr TK Mehta took over as the sole editor-in-chief in 1960 and had a long tenure till 1971. Meanwhile, a schism had occurred in the IADV, and a new organisation named The Dermatological Society of India (DSI) was formed in 1960. The split was a relatively short-lived affair, however. On 20 August 1972, in a meeting at Calcutta, the DSI and IADV representatives finalized the modalities of merging the two organizations together.⁵ The new unified Association would take shape in 1973 and would be known as the Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists & Leprologists (IADVL). According to the terms of merger of DSI and IADV, *IJDV* was to be the official organ of the new Association with a new name, the *Indian Journal of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprology (IJDVL)*. Bhaktavizam Chetty, who had taken over the mantle of editing *IJDV* in 1972, oversaw the transition and the first issue of *IJDVL* was published in 1976.

Over the next few decades, *IJDVL* was fortunate to get a string of very good editors, all of whom left indelible marks in the evolution of the journal. Rachel Mathai, of the Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore was the first woman to be at the helm of *IJDVL* in 1977. Her tenure, till 1983, was marked by the publication of a lot of self-assessment articles. The next one to take up the editing of the journal was JS Pasricha (1984–90). An avid researcher himself, he published an increased number of original articles and novel research. SG Deshpande (1991–92) was instrumental in adding more colour photos in the journal. Under Gurmohan Singh (1992–96), the journal continued its trajectory of further development, adding still more original research articles and introducing colour photo quiz. K Pavithran (1997–2002), the next editor, added more pages with an emphasis on case reports.

How to cite this article: Panda S, Khopkar U. *IJDVL: Journey of a journal*. Indian J Dermatol Venereol Leprol 2022;88:703-5.

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Received: October, 2022 **Accepted:** October, 2022 **Epub Ahead of Print:** *** **Published:** November, 2022

DOI: 10.25259/IJDVL_976_2022 **PMID:** ***

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Editors of IJDVL and chronology of name changes of the journal

Editor	Name of Journal	Start Yr.	End Yr.
UB Narayan Rao	Indian Journal of Venereal Diseases	1935	1940
UB Narayan Rao	Indian Journal of Venereal Diseases and Dermatology	1941	1955
UB Narayan Rao (Managing Editor)	Indian Journal of Dermatology and Venereology	1956	1960
SC Mehta			
RV Rajam (Editor, Venereology Section)			
G. Panja (Editor, Dermatology Section)			
TK Mehta	Indian Journal of Dermatology and Venereology	1960	1971
Bhaktaviziam	Indian Journal of Dermatology and Venereology	1972	1975
Bhaktaviziam	Indian Journal of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprology (IJDVL)	1976	1977
Rachel Mathai	IJDVL	1977	1983
JS Pasricha	IJDVL	1984	1990
SG Deshpande	IJDVL	1991	1992
Gurmohan Singh	IJDVL	1992	1996
K Pavithran	IJDVL	1997	2002
Uday Khopkar	IJDVL	2003	2008
DM Thappa	IJDVL	2009	2013
M Ramam	IJDVL	2014	2017
Saumya Panda	IJDVL	2017	-

Courtesy: Dogra S, Sacchidanand S, Somaiah S, Panda S, Khopkar U. IADVL Textbook of Dermatology and Journals. In: Thappa DM, ed. 50 Glorious Years of IADVL: Historical Milestones and Glimpses. IADVL 2022

The modern era in *IJDVL* was ushered in during the incumbency of Uday Khopkar (2003–08), with the dawn of digital age in journal publishing and modern typesetting. The journal began to be published on its website. The articles had to be submitted online and the manuscripts began to be processed through a manuscript management system software that hosted all peer review and editorial activities and recorded these for posterity. *IJDVL* adopted an open access publication model, whereby neither the authors nor the readers had to pay a dime to publish or access articles - a model now known as the so-called 'platinum open access'. The same model is in operation till now. Colour photos began to be published with all kinds of articles at no cost to the authors. The journal got indexed with PubMed in 2004. The articles began to get digital object identifier (Doi) links. Soft copies of articles were being made available in portable document formats (pdf). E-publications were introduced. The breadth and depth of the responsibilities of the journal editor increased so much that the practice of the incoming editor to be selected one year prior, to be trained under the incumbent editor, was introduced.

During the tenure of the next editor, DM Thappa (2009–13), the rising stature of the journal got reflected by *IJDVL* being included in the Science Citation Index – Expanded (SCI-E).

IJDVL made its debut in the Journal Citation Report (2009) with a journal impact factor (JIF) of 0.9. The JIF crossed the landmark of 1 during Dr Thappa's editorship in the year 2012. Author mapping was introduced to document the increasingly international footprint of the journal in terms of its authors. Publishing ahead of print articles was another crucial step introduced at this time.

The term of the next editor, M Ramam (2014–17), saw the JIF climb up to nearly 2 (1.948). The author base got broadened across the world. To reflect the coming of age of *IJDVL* as a bona fide international journal, best article awards in different categories were introduced for international authors alongside their Indian counterparts. Currently, about half of the authors of *IJDVL* are from abroad. The journal website became extremely popular with more than one million visitors per year. However, the really significant legacies of Dr Ramam's editorship were development of a multi-tiered editorial process⁶ and formation of a cohesive editorial team.

In the following years, the processes were streamlined further, and the team was consolidated to that end. The editorial board was subdivided to clearly indicate the respective responsibility of each team member. The production values of the journal were given a premium, whether by introduction of colour coding

for each article, or raising a separate cadre of editors, namely 'image editors,' tasked with improvement of the pictorial data in the journal. This was done to reflect the character of the discipline of dermatology as a primarily visual one.

The 2019 Journal Citation Report saw *IJDVL* breach the JIF level of 3 (3.030). For four years (2017–20), *IJDVL* was the highest ranked scholarly journal published from India across all disciplines (all sciences including biomedical and health sciences, physical sciences and mathematics, technology and engineering, social sciences and the arts and humanities), as per JIF.⁷ The journal h index has trebled in the last 10 years (from 15 in 2011 to 45 in 2021). The 5-year impact factor has consistently hovered around 3.5.

However, it would be a travesty to judge the current trajectory of the journal through the lens of a few dry scientometric or bibliometric indices, however creditable those seem to be.⁸ In fact, many of the editorial policies and actions of the current team were adopted with the full knowledge that these would adversely affect JIF in the short-term, including swimming against the tide during the past two years by blindly not publishing anything mentioning Covid,⁹ refusing to brand the journal as a vehicle of 'skin of colour' articles,¹⁰ or taking the momentous decision to change our publisher in the midst of a disabling pandemic in order to provide our authors, reviewers and editors a world-class manuscript management system.¹¹

Perhaps the biggest legacies of the present editorial dispensation will be the effort made to develop a platform to provide for a superb experience in article submission and reviewing, and assembling and synchronizing a huge team

of dedicated and independent editors to screen articles fairly, and as speedily as possible,¹² all the while never losing focus of its primary calling, that is to define every submitted article as a scientific project that should ask specific, testable questions and satisfactorily answer those.

From here, *IJDVL* can travel only in one direction – upward.

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