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We were invited to present a paper at the First Asia Pacific Association for Medical Journal Editors (APAME: http://www.apame.org) conference held last month in Seoul, Korea, and we were amazed as to the status of scientific publications in this region. There is fierce competition between higher learning institutions and universities and both alike are aggressively targeting themselves for a place in reputable and high-impact scientific journals, namely for the incentives and status that come along with it and the push for a higher ranking for their institutions in the global arena. International collaboration in research and journal publishing is something that we need to seriously think about, particularly in our region, where resources are scarce and we do need to compensate these from elsewhere. We summarize the key points of our presentation here.

Because of globalization and the rapid development of information technology and scientific communication, international cooperation in public health activities has been intensified to further promote public health. Where scientific research is becoming more global in nature, journal visibility is a must in this age of information, communication, and technological (ICT) advancement and in view of globalization. There is greater emphasis on elevating journals to a higher level and thus a dire need for good research and high-quality publication. However, many journals in this region are of varying quality, resulting in competition for high-quality articles.

Some of the problems that journals are facing include finance, peer review system, journal management, and operation guidelines; these have to be addressed in order for us to compete with more established journals from advanced countries. The other problems include the rather low representation of regional journals, including biomedical journals, in international indexing databases. Language issue and the lack of research culture have also compounded the problems of high-quality research and publication. Because of financial constraint, there is a need to collaborate and share experiences and resources at the regional level and thus to compensate for these, resources from overseas need to be sought. Collaboration is also needed with regard to training for editors, reviewers, researchers, and educators, and such international collaboration helps researchers improve the quality of their publication in reputable international scientific journals.

Taking advantage of the Internet technology and Web-based social networks is crucial for international collaboration in research and publication. Social networking among scientists and researchers should be seen as an outreach tool particularly in the cyber infrastructure and e-science.¹

As for citation, it has been shown that publications stemming from international collaborative

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research work tend to be more highly cited than research with no international collaboration. International coauthored papers have also resulted in higher citation as compared with those from purely domestic or national publications. Apart from the journal’s impact factor, among other factors, the citation success of an article is also influenced by the author’s geographical location, and may be because of the geopolitical biases in publication. Thus, international collaboration is a way of overcoming such an obstacle.

Collaboration should be a way forward to improve journal quality, its coverage, and its impact. Furthermore, there should be more research in this area of international collaboration in journal publishing. Based on a report by the World Health Organization, the intraregional and extraregional collaboration on public health and health systems in terms of its research production in the Western Pacific Region, has changed over the years. Australia, China, and New Zealand had relatively larger share in public health and health systems research. New Zealand and Australia were two of the most open countries to collaborate within the region and with relatively poorer countries. Intraregional collaboration increased between 1992 and 2001 by more than 10% and extraregional collaboration increased 9% within the same period. This increased is attributed to the increase in collaboration with high-income countries within the region. Asia Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH) can play a role in terms of bridging the gap between its member institutions as far as sharing of resources (facilities and manpower), research, and intellectual collaboration, training and management, and financial collaboration are concerned. Within the APACPH itself and among its member institutions, several memoranda of understanding were signed between different universities from various countries for purposes of teaching, research, and consultancies; one should keep track and monitor its research output and publications. Our journal, the Asia-Pacific Journal of Public Health will strive for international collaboration in research and publications with the aim of improving its citation and impact factor. Not only will research and publication collaboration benefit the researcher or the individual scientists but also the population at large, both regionally and globally.

References