

"Digital open access initiatives in health information: Oman Medical Journal as a model"

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Abstract:

Open source is one of the modern terminologies in the field of accessing information. They have several objectives; they are important in providing information to the reader and researcher without incurring any financial expenses. They can be beneficial any time anywhere for they are in an electronic form through some websites in various human knowledge fields. There are plenty of international examples of open sources like directory of open access journal. The organizers define this guide:

We define open access journals as journals that use a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. From the BOAI definition [1] of "open access" we take the right of users to "read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles" as mandatory for a journal to be included in the directory.

[1] <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/boaifaq.htm#openaccess>

Researchers found a set of models and initiatives in the field of open access journal like Oman medical journals

[2] *Oman Medical Journal was founded in 1984. It is a peer-reviewed journal, publishes six issues a year by Oman Medical Specialty Board. Oman Medical Journal is indexed by PubMed Central, Index Copernicus, Google Scholar, EBSCO Academic Search Complete, Index Medicus (WHO), UlrichsWeb Directory, CABI Publishing (Center for Agricultural Bioscience (CAB) Abstracts & Global Health Database), CINAHL, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Genamics JournalSeek, GALE (InfoTrac, Academic One File, & Health Solutions), and Open J-Gate. It is distributed free to all Medical doctors and allied health professionals in various institutions locally and internationally. It intends to engage and inform doctors, researchers and other health professionals by publishing a wide range of peer-reviewed articles in various medical disciplines.[2] <http://www.omjournal.org/index.aspx>*

The researchers will discuss in this paper several important topics, including:

- 1 - Open sources and their role in supporting Omani researchers.*
- 2 - Omani medical Journal: its history, objectives and role in research activity.*

3 - *Omani Medical Journal: its work mechanism.*

4 - *The scientific assessment of the Omani Medical Journal.*

Keywords: [Open access](#) , [Journals](#) , [Health Information](#) , [Oman Medical Journals](#) , [Knowledge for all](#)

Introduction

Is no longer the problem of access to scientific and technical information and sharing it as the same as what it was in the past twenties, where it was a scientific communication in recent drastic changes caused mainly by rising prices subscribe to scientific journals and acquisition of commercial publishers on copyright, it has become difficult for researchers and their institutions and the scientific research centres and universities that observe the results of scientific research despite being producers and investors at the same time. Changes embodied defined by the scientific communication system in the emergence of the term free access or Open Access as a new model for scientific communication since the beginning of the nineties of the last century. This term is concentrated on the principle of re-own from the researchers and research institution for scientific research results through free online publications without the mediation of commercial publishers.

Open Access is one of the modern terminologies in the field of accessing information. They have several objectives; they are important in providing information to the reader and researcher without incurring any financial expenses. They can be beneficial any time anywhere for they are in an electronic form through some websites in various human knowledge fields.

Lots of conferences and seminars have discussed the topic of Multi magazines open source. And among the most important of these conferences is the initiative of Budapest in 2002 (BOAI, 2002) that known as Budapest open access initiatives, which is one of the most important meetings held to discuss this topic and the results of this meeting has been defined magazines open source as: "a new technology that allows scientists and researchers to publish the results of their scientific research in the scientific journals in order to be available for all without bearing the financial burdens involved," and appeared after this initiative a lot of projects in the field of allowing the access of scientific sources such as the project that is called (DOAJ) that stands for The directory of open access journal where this project allows access to thousands of scientific articles and scientific journals in electronic form through the project's website www.doaj.org.

It is worth mentioning that in the Sultanate of Oman appeared initiatives in the same field which is the heart of this study, where the Council of medical specialties adopt a project of Omani Medical Journal which is similar to the project DOAJ. The only difference is that medical Journal is specialized in medical fields as it allows free access to hundreds of scientific articles which are approved by a lot of the medical specialized entities either in Oman or abroad, and it is available on its website: www.omjournal.org , and the research paper will discuss a set of points, including:

- Open source and its role in supporting the Omani researchers.
- Omani medical journal, its history, and its objectives, and its role in research mobility.
- Mechanism of the Omani Medical Journal.
- The scientific assessment of the Omani Journal of Medicine

Problem of the study

In fact, for the open-source of scientific magazines roles in reviving the movement of knowledge in developed and developing countries, therefore the researchers admit that the open source bearing the important slogan that called the “knowledge of all” which means that any science or branch of human knowledge should not be a monopoly for long period inside inaccessible crucible or impossible in many cases, which insist the information seeker or researcher to participate and pay for obtaining such knowledge. So the researchers will focus on solving the problem of the role of the necessity of open source magazines in supporting of research mobility in Sultanate of Oman. To achieve that we took one of the initiatives approved by UNESCO as the first initiative in the Sultanate of Oman, as stated on the website of the organization.

The importance of the study

This study aims to shed light on the open-source scientific journals and their importance in building a sustainable scientific structure through the provision of information, research and facilitate access to it. And the researchers summed up the importance of free access or what we called open-source journals in a number of points, namely: -

- There are a lot of problems faced by researchers in access to scientific information, may be difficult for many because of the weakness of the budget at the party that they belong, but we and through initiatives of free access has been possible to expand the dissemination of human knowledge and to eliminate the scientific monopoly, and to allow the building of ideas and projects to become possible as a result of providing the infrastructure for it.
- Free access eliminates the obstacles of research proposals’ weakness in various academic and research institutions.
- Open-source and magazines are available in electronic form saves a lot of time and effort for the researcher, Because the ease of access through the World Wide Web for information.

Objectives of the study

This paper aims to:

- Highlight the initiatives of free access, including open-source journals.
- Indicate the role of open source journals in the recovery of research movement in Sultanate of Oman.
- Get acquainted with the initiative of the Council of medical specialties through the Omani Journal of Medicine, which is considered as one of the pioneer projects in the Sultanate.
- Identify the Oman Medical Journal, its history, its objectives, its achievements, future plans.
- set technical proposals for the development of the initiative Journal of Medical Oman and expand its rang, and lay the foundation for other initiatives.

Questions of the study

The study includes a set of fundamental questions related to another group of sub-questions, that lead finally to get in the complete view on the subject of the study, and those questions: -

- What is the role of Omani medical journal in the recovery of publishing movement in Oman?
- To what extent the publishing activities of the magazine can reach and its evolution and the rate of research that are handled annually?
- How much does the Reference rate cite for the magazine?
- What achievements made by Omani Medical Journal up to date?
- What is the future plan for Omani medical journal?

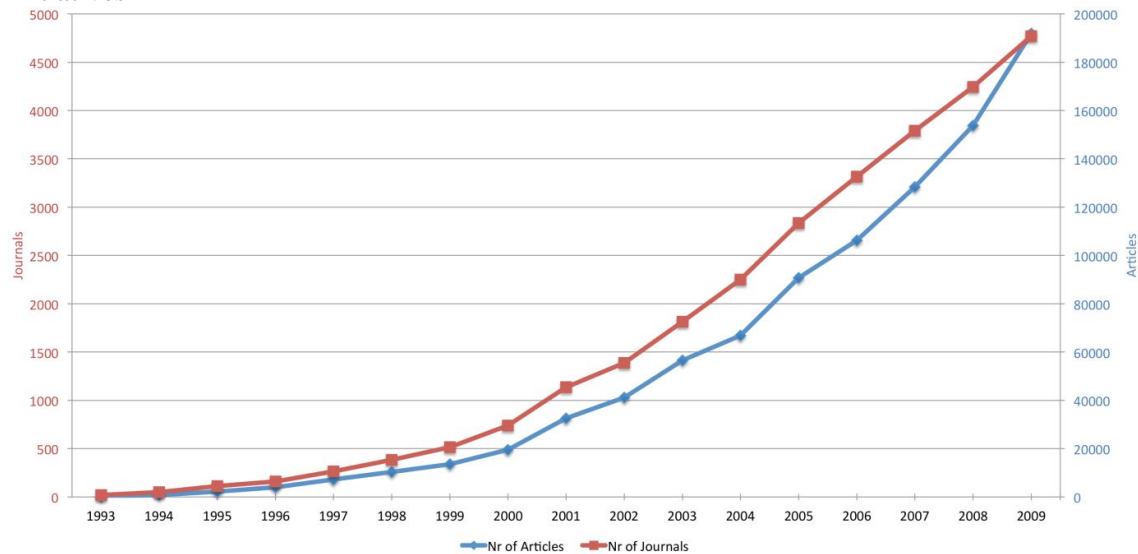
Terms of the study

Free circulation or Open Access: -

Could be defined as "the way to make the informational content is free and available worldwide via the Internet, where the publisher keeps archives available on-line to be accessed for free, or that he filed the information in the open access repository and is available on a large scale. And free access is a new pattern of dissemination of scientific grew for the Liberation of researchers and libraries of the restrictions imposed on them.

It is commonly known that the dictionary which defines Libraries and Information Science to be available on-line as "ODLIS" Which is a process for electronic publishing and a way to provide information in electronic format and made it available to the beneficiaries and participants via the Internet or via the service hotline and falls under the electronic publication of: e-books, e-journals, newsletters and databases" (Maha Ahmed Ibrahim Mohamed, 2010).

And we can observe through the following graph, the increasing of global trend towards making information available for free of charge through the free circulation initiatives



Open Access Journals:-

"Open-access journals are scholarly journals that are available online to the reader "without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself." Some are subsidized, and some require payment on behalf of the author. Subsidized journals are financed by an academic institution, learned society or a government information centre; those requiring payment are typically financed by money made available to researchers for the purpose from a public or private funding agency, as part of a research grant. There have also been several modifications of open-access journals that have considerably different natures: hybrid open-access journals and delayed open-access journals" (Wikipedia,2013).

About the journals (OMSB)

Oman Medical Journal (Oman Med J) is a peer-reviewed journal, published bimonthly by OMSB and is distributed free to all Medical doctors and allied health care professionals in the Sultanate of Oman as well as internationally. Oman Med J is a periodic publication of review articles, original studies and other forms of medical literature highlighting the latest advances and developments in the field of medicine. Founded and initially launched in 1984, the journal has consistently progressed regionally and has experienced a significant International outreach since its establishment, particularly, in the last few years under the custodian of OMSB. The journal is also featured in World renowned indices and scholarly databases for medical communication such as Scopus, EBSCO and PubMed Central; Oman Med J is also listed in PubMed and is working towards being featured in Medline as one of its main long term objectives.

- What is the role of Omani medical journal in the recovery of publishing movement in Oman?

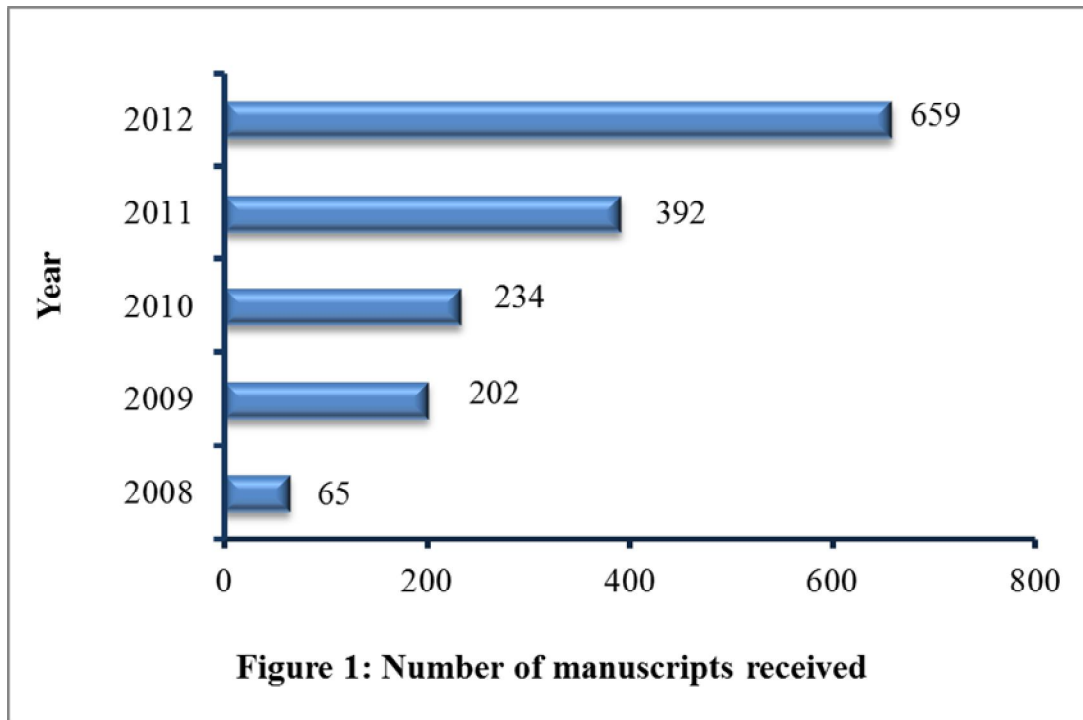
The journal purports to engage and inform doctors, researchers and other health care professionals by publishing an extensive range of peer-reviewed articles in various medical disciplines. Its objective is solidly based upon the timely publication of a wide range of articles encompassing all aspects of medicine through established as well as innovative research and practices; thus contributing to the highly competitive and ever advancing body of medical literature.

- To what extent the publishing activity in the magazine and its evolution and the rate of research that are handled each year, and distribute those articles on the countries of the region?

Over the past 12 months, Oman Med J has further extended its reviewer database, comprising of dedicated specialists from various medical disciplines both locally and internationally. In 2012 alone, a total of 2085 completed reviews were submitted from 2006 reviewers; among these reviews, the reviewer recommendations were as follows; 43.5% (n=907) decided to accept the manuscript after review, 27% (n=561) accepted the manuscript for publication

without alteration, 15% (316) requested extensive revision of the manuscripts, while 14% (n=301) rejected the manuscripts for publication.

The journal office received a total of 659 submissions in 2012, which is a 68% increase in the number of manuscripts compared to only 392 received in 2011, (Figure 1). from (OMSB 2012 ANNUAL REPORT)



The magazine has gained in the research submission of proposals from 2011 to 2012 as you can see in table1 below. In addition the table shows increase in the number of submission from 41 different countries in 2012 compared to 34 different countries in 2011

Table 1: The number and origin of manuscripts submitted to Oman Med J (2011 vs. 2012)

COUNTRY	2011 n	2012 n
<i>Africa</i>		
Cameroon	1	1
Nigeria	19	22
South Africa	2	0
<i>MENA</i>		
Bahrain	4	2
Egypt	5	2
Iraq	32	31
Iran	59	104
Jordan	3	12
Kuwait	4	2
Lebanon	2	1
Libya	0	1
Morocco	0	1
Oman	85	95
Palestine	0	5
Qatar	2	4
Saudi Arabia	51	45
Sudan	3	8
Syrian Arab Republic	4	3
Tunisia	0	11
United Arab Emirates	2	3
Yemen	2	6
<i>Europe</i>		
Austria	1	0
Belgium	0	1
Czech Republic	0	1
France	0	1
Germany	1	1
Ireland	1	0
Italy	1	0
Switzerland	1	0
United Kingdom	1	5
<i>Asia</i>		
Bangladesh	4	4
Brunei	0	2
China	0	2
India	110	210

Japan	1	0
Malaysia	4	5
Nepal	0	2
Pakistan	15	20
Philippines	0	2
Russian Federation	0	1
Singapore	1	1
Sri Lanka	0	1
Taiwan	1	0
Turkey	7	31
<i>Americas</i>		
Canada	5	2
Mexico	0	1
United States	3	3
<i>Australia & New Zealand</i>		
Australia	1	0
New Zealand	0	4

As the data indicates (Figure 2), in 2012 the main contributors in terms of submissions are India (32%), Iran (16%), Oman (14%), Saudi Arabia (7%), and Turkey (5%). In 2011, Oman ranked second with 73 (19%) of submissions, while it has dropped to third place in 2012 accounting for 14% (n=95) of the total submissions; of the manuscripts received from Oman, 43% were case reports and 33% were original articles. Turkey accounted for 5% (n=31) of the total 2012 submissions, a very significant increase from 2% in 2011. Overall, the statistics indicate a growing international readership of the journal as opposed to the publications being limited to the local region only.

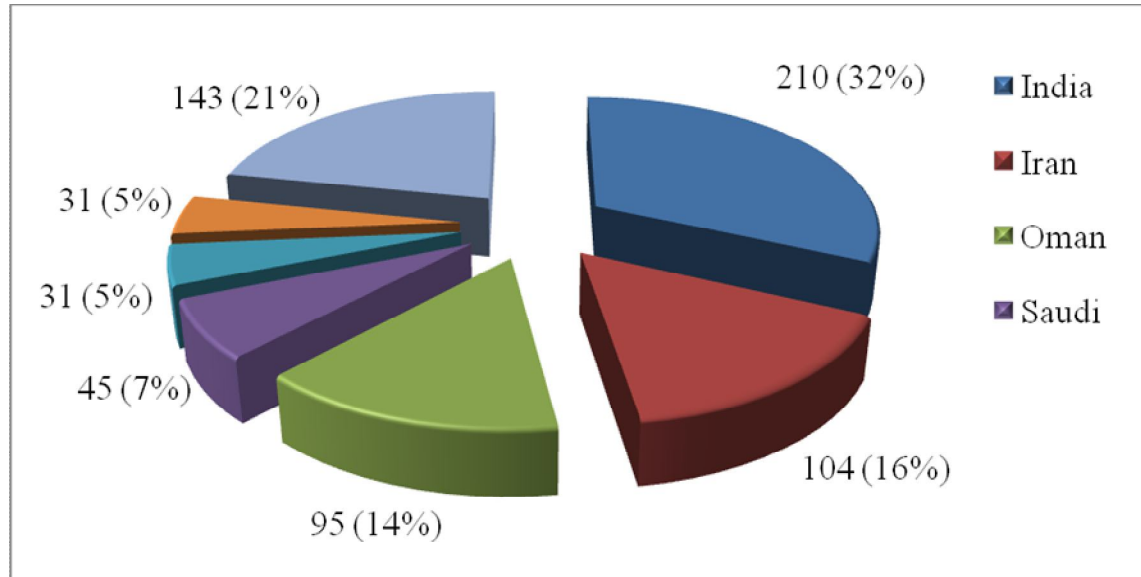


Figure 2: The main contributors for the year 2012.

In 2012, Oman medical journals have successfully published 129 manuscripts including 49 original articles, 6 review articles, in addition to editorials, cases reports, brief communications, correspondences, supplement issues, and conference proceedings (Table 2).

Type of Article	20	20
Original		
Review		
Editorial		
Case Report		
Brief Communication		
Clinical Quiz		
Clinical Notes		
Conference Proceedings		
Letter to Editor		
Total	1	1

Amongst many objectives, Oman Med J was seeking to increase the number of original article submissions as opposed to case reports. This was clearly significantly achieved in 2012, in which 313 of the total submissions were original studies, while 239 were case reports, (Figure 3). Hence, 47% of the 2012 processed manuscripts are original articles, 36% are case reports (it is the objective of Oman Med J to reduce this figure further), in order to improve quality.

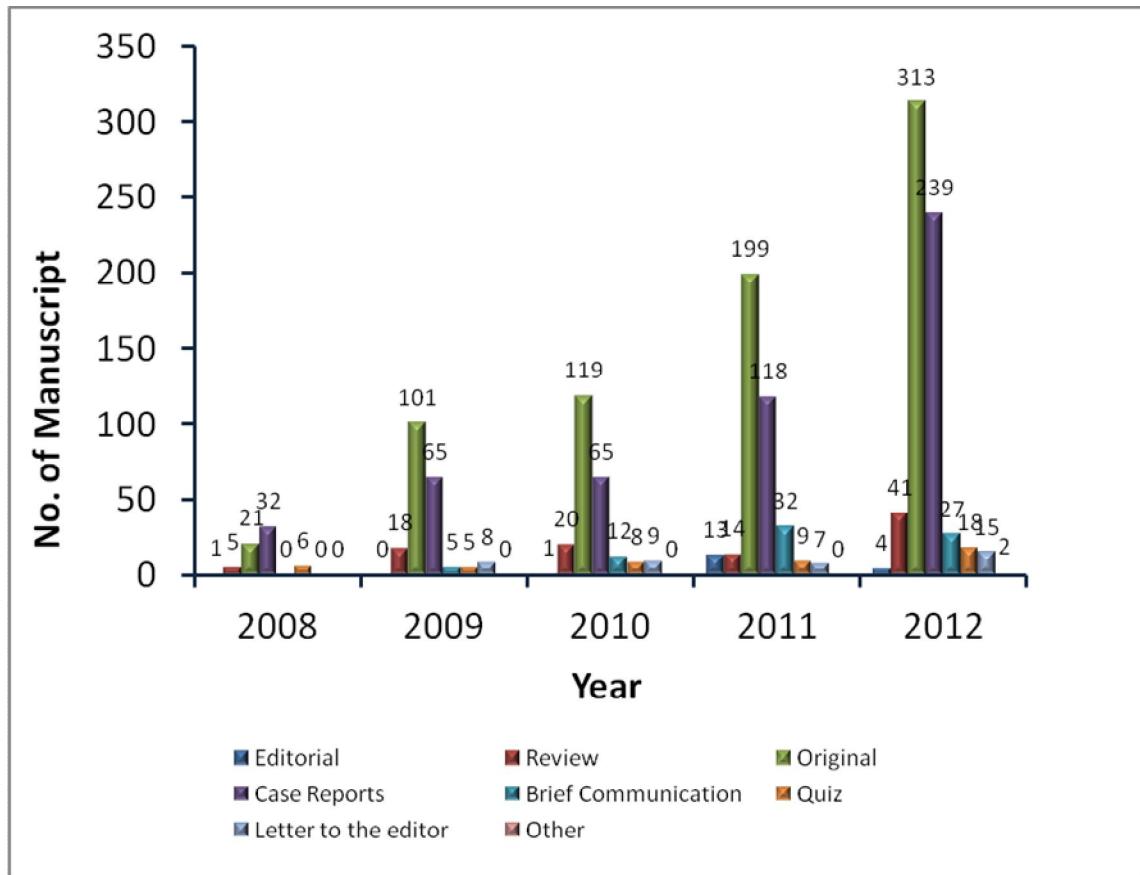


Figure 3: The number of manuscripts submitted according to article type.

As Figure 4 indicates, of all the 2012 submissions, only 7% (n=47) have been accepted and deemed suitable for publication in Oman Med J; whereas, 55% (n=359) have been rejected for reasons such as the following: a) insufficient originality, b) serious scientific or technical flaws, c) lack of a significant message, d) lack of public health relevance, e) low priority of the topic for publication, or f) not conforming to the journal's norms, amongst other specific and technical bases.

Among the most significant highlights for the year 2012 for Oman Med J would have to be the attainment of 55% rejection rate as opposed to just below 37% in 2011. This has long been a long-term objective for the journal to attain at least a 40% rejection rate on par with most other journals among the medical and scholarly publications. The fact that we have managed to surpass that benchmark rate of 40% within a year is a great achievement for the journal and it is very indicative of the improved quality of the published materials, as well as the high standard of quality that our Editors deem to be suitable for the journal.

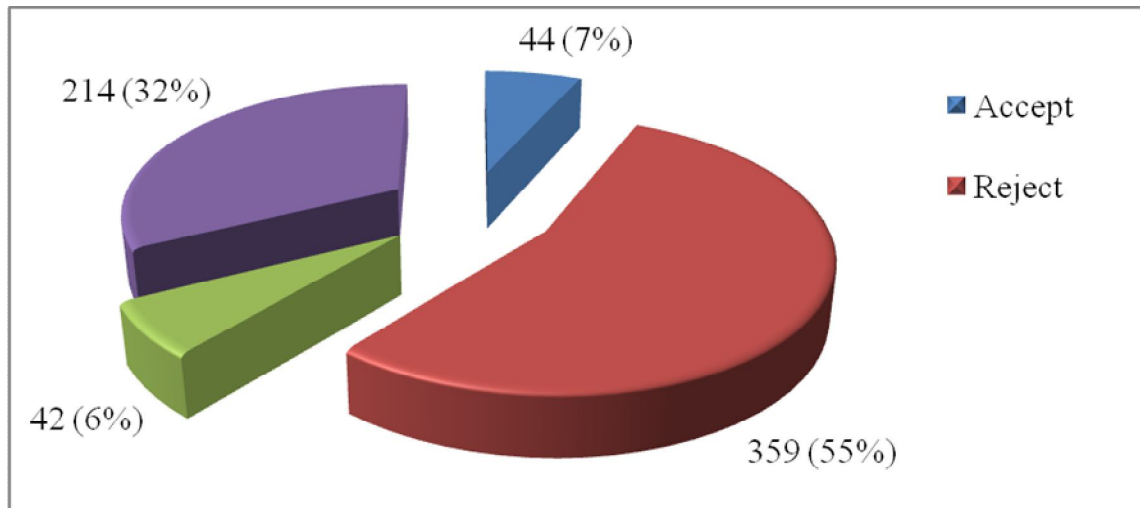


Figure 4: Manuscript Status.

- How much the reference rate of cite the magazine?

One of the most important targets for Oman Med J is to obtain an impact factor, which can only be achieved once the journal has been cited in a certain number of publications in the literature. Oman Med J recently adopted a new policy where the authors must cite at least one previous Oman Med J publication where it may be deemed relevant, if their work is to be considered for publication. This will increase the number of Oman Med J citations and enhance our chances of obtaining an impact factor. This policy has only recently been employed, but will be fully enforced on all submissions from 1st January 2013.

Oman medical journals Achievements

In 2012, Oman Med J made managed to achieve all its short-term objectives, namely: a) timely publication of 6 Journal issues; b) Extending International recognition by applying additional renowned scholarly databases; c) minimized the overall manuscript turnover time; and d) seen a further increase in international submissions, amongst many other achievements which are detailed below. We have also increased the number of printed copies of the journal from 700 to 1000 in 2012, thus extending the distribution of the journal, both locally as well as abroad.

Oman Med J enjoys the full indexing privileges with PubMed Central, Scopus, Index Copernicus, Google Scholar, EBSCO Academic Search Complete, Index Medicus (WHO), Ulrichs Web Directory, CABI Publishing, CINAHL, Global Health, Expanded Academic ASAP, Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ), Genomic Journal Seek, GALE, Open J-Gate, and CrossRef. In addition to being listed in PubMed, Oman Med J has made several application for inclusion of its publications to a number of scholarly databases detailed in Table 3.

No.	INDEX NAME	RESPONSE	STATUS	DATE
1	SCImago Journal and Country Rank (SJR)	Once we appear in Scopus, it will automatically passed to SJR. Follow up Scopus (waiting for reply)	title's metrics will be available around April 2013	4 Dec 2012
2	Embase	Application form forwarded	Waiting	27 Nov 2012
3	Citebase	Sent reminder	No response	26 Nov 2012
4	EmCare	Sent reminder	No response	26 Nov 2012
5	Health Reference Center Academic	Sent reminder (Gale)	No response	
6	Science Citation Index	Sent reminder	No response	3 Dec 2012
7	VINITI - Russian Academy of Science	Sent reminder	No response	3 Dec 2012
8	Journal Citation Reports/Science Edition	Sent reminder	No response	
9	Academic OneFile	Sent reminder	No response	3 Dec 2012
10	IBIDS	Sent reminder	No response	3 Dec 2012
11	ZETOC	Accepts open access journals with OA icon only	Sent inquiry to PMC regarding OA icon	16 Dec 2012
12	AGRICOLA	I have taken a look at the journal's content and concluded that it is out of scope for AGRICOLA whose focus in on agriculture and related sciences. I'm assuming your journal is already indexed in MEDLINE.	Not related	05 July 2012
13	OCLC	http://www.oclc.org/us/en/membership/criteria/default.htm for information on OCLC Membership Criteria.	Waiting	
14	Research Information Network (RIN)	small research and policy consultancy; we do not run any bibliographic or indexing services	Not related	26 Nov 2012
15	National Agricultural Library	Focus on Agriculture and related sciences only	Not related	2 July 2012

Table 3: New Applications made for Indexing of Oman Med J Publications.

On 22nd-26th April 2012, Oman Med J hosted the fourth Scientific Writing and Peer Review Workshop on "Scientific Writing and Peer Review" as well as "Study Design and Data reporting". The workshops were intended to enhance and provide further understanding of research and review procedures for all participating Oman Med J authors, reviewers, and resident doctors under OMSB training programs. The event also aimed to improve the understanding of the most basic and most common study designs in medicine, as well as reporting of data from medical research. The workshops were designed to cover the key principles of study design and then convey the best way to report the results from such studies. The event had a great turnout and received excellent feedback from the attendees. This workshop was conducted as a result of the successes of previous workshops and due to the high demand for more workshop sessions to focus on clinical research, conducting and

reporting observational studies, as well as conducting and reporting systematic reviews from the attendees of the Third Scientific Writing and Peer Review Workshop in 2011.

As part of Oman Med J's strategy of increasing publicity and reach of the journal, we took the opportunity to promote the journal at the following events:

- 9th Gulf Heart Association Conference, Al Bustan Palace, Muscat, 18-21 January 2012
- Medical Specialty Careers Day, SQU, 22nd October 2012
- 3rd Pan-Arab Rhinology Society Conference, SQU, 5-7th November 2012
- 18th International Pediatric Conference - "Striving Towards Excellence", SQU, 13-15th November 2012
- 2nd Pan-Arab Hematology Conference, SQU, 13-15th November 2012.
- Oman Lipid & Atherosclerosis Society Conference, Shangri La, 1st December 2012

Such events have proven to be very useful campaigns, where Oman Med J can be distributed among the participants who may not be on our mailing list, those who are not registered on our website, or even to those who were previously unaware of the journal and its scope of work. This is one objective that we hope to continue and hopefully take part in larger events across the region in the near future.

Oman Medical Journals Future Plan

Oman Med J staff aim to excel in their tasks by engaging, being involved and being up-to-date with the latest events, developments, processes, software and industry updates pertaining to this line of work. In addition, attending key events, conferences or training would build a network of key contacts, learn new skills, and be on par with our peers in the field of medical publishing. This field of work being very competitive, this may be a long-term objective worth considering. Thus, undertaking professional training and gaining key skills in the field are important endeavours for the development of staff, as well as the success of the journal.

Furthermore, Oman Med J has set a resolute set of objectives to be adopted and implemented in order for the journal to achieve its long-term objectives of attaining indexing status with Medline and attaining an impact factor, these being the most critical objectives. However, over the next 12 months, amongst other objectives, Oman Med J will attempt to accomplish all its short-term objectives namely: a) hiring of new staff; b) timely publication of 6 Journal issues; c) extending International recognition by additional renowned databases such as Medline; d) reduced the overall manuscript turnover time; e) keep up with the ever changing pace and direction of scholarly publications; and f) increase the international flow of manuscript submissions.

In order to realize these goals, it is therefore crucial for Oman Med J to focus on the following strategies in pursuit of such goals: a) increase efficiency of the review process and further minimize turnover time; b) encourage/Impose authors to cite Oman Med J publications in their articles; c) configure a stringent and effective workflow system; d) improve quality and standard of published materials; e) focus more on Original studies and limit the publication of case reports; f) increase participation of Omani doctors; g) extend the international scope of the journal; h) increase publicity and promotion by distributing the journal at key events; i) keep up-to-date with industry news and latest developments; j) encourage Pharmaceutical, Research and Academic institutions to advertise in Oman Med J; k) initiate preparations for Medline application; and finally l) Monthly publications of Oman Med J.

Results

- The study found many of the most important results:

Omani Journal of Medicine was established in 1984 and since then, the magazine has imposed itself regionally and internationally, evidenced by its strong presence in the specialized databases such as: Scopus, EBSCO and PubMed.

- Omani Medical Journal plays a major role and prominent role in supporting the mobility of knowledge and research in the Sultanate in the medical field through the availability and dissemination of many research studies.

- The magazine has succeeded in achieving many achievements, including, for example, increase the number of copies printed from 700 to 1,000 copies in 2012 and other achievements.

- the magazine future plan focused on:

- Improve quality and standard of published materials.
- Focus more on Original studies and limit the publication of case reports.
- Increase participation of Omani doctors.
- Extend the international scope of the journal.

Recommendations

- Need to highlight the role of the magazine and marketing it internally and externally in order to allow the dissemination of knowledge, and highlight them through specialized conferences in the medical field around the world.

- Need to work on the development of the magazine's website and start using it and start of entering modern technologies and techniques in the field of classification and indexing of scientific articles based on Dublin Core standard and RDA standard indexing.

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