The Significance of Publishing an Inaugural Issue in the Existing Plethora of Journals

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"Does it have any significance to add a journal to the sea of journals already present in the world?" This was the first question that I asked, and a fundamental one as a middle-aged scholar, when the Journal of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine asked for an important mission of Editor-in-Chief. The Journal of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine was launched by the Elyns Publishing Group and employs renowned researchers from across the globe as editorial board members. These days, every academic field is overflowing with journals that must be ranked by an objective indicator, while researchers compete fiercely to publish their papers.

Journals appear and disappear, but it is more and more difficult to breach the barrier into the high-ranking group. What researcher can ignore the list of Science Citation Index journals and their impact factors? In a reality where many universities evaluate a professor’s achievements and promotion based on articles published in recognized journals, the birth of a new journal seems rife with inherent risk. In order to survive in such a competitive sea of journals, a journal should have unique value in one form or another, and small but strong academic vitality should be cultivated.

As such, what academic value should the Journal of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine create, and through what vision, as it hoists the sails for a first voyage? Based on my experience from the quickening period of the journal, I believe that the following two things will foster our unique value.

First, although the journal deals with epidemiology and preventive medicine as a main topic, I hope that through editors and authors from various fields and backgrounds it becomes a journal embracing subjects covering the full breadth of medicine. I would like it to play host to a field of academic diversity, where experts from many fields of study present results that will have an impact on the diagnosis and treatment of many human diseases, with epidemiology and preventive medicine as academic fundamentals, not as goals. Already, the editors appointed by our journal include those with expertise in all areas of medicine, as well as in epidemiology and preventive medicine.

What is the value of medical staff, as both clinicians and researchers? Alfred Sommer, the dean of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, suggested ‘saving lives-millions at a time’ to be an ambitious goal for the school. He proposed a vision of clinicians not only saving a single life through treatment, but of clinicians as researchers in public health who can save millions of lives through important research achievements.

Thus, the value of each medical staff person exists on a continuum somewhere between saving one life at a time and saving millions of lives. Each person’s value is unique and will contribute to humanity on both small and large scales. Our journal should allow various approaches to the academic fields of epidemiology and preventive medicine, in order to embrace the unique value of medical staff from various fields. In addition, in all of medicine there is not a single field that does not rely on the concepts of epidemiology and preventive medicine.

Second, I hope that this journal becomes a field of opportunity for young researchers of the next generation. I intend to prepare the ground for offering young and enthusiastic scientists the opportunity to publish papers and for encouraging their ground breaking research. In publishing the inaugural issue, and going through discussions with staff as Editor-in-Chief, I decided to establish the JEPM Young Scientist Research Award, which will be awarded to competent young scientists around the world. The award, starting in 2015, will select young scientists who have published excellent papers during the previous year and will include a certificate and small cash prize. Beyond its commercial purpose, I hope that ‘service and commitment to the next generation’ becomes an important virtue of our journal.

In any form, a ‘first’ always has special significance. In publishing this inaugural issue of the Journal of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, I hope it has unique value among the journals flickering like stars in the night sky, and I trust that this first step, though small, will be a sign of many major accomplishments to come.