

Taking research into real life

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In 1994, when the first issue of JRCS was published in print format, Sri Lanka was not connected to global internet. In the editorial of that inaugural issue, first editor Prasad Kumarasinghe highlights the high cost of medical journals and poor library facilities available to practicing clinicians, limiting access to new knowledge.¹

Sri Lanka's first step towards internet connectivity, the LEARN (Lanka Experimental Academic & Research Network) project of University of Moratuwa had started in 1990, but was rudimentary, limited to an academic email service. It became first connected to global internet in 1995 giving unrestricted access to users.²

Twenty three years on in 2017 now, the situation has completely changed. Today a clinician looking for knowledge needs to deal with information overload than poor access. At the time of writing this editorial a Google search gave 4,250,000 hits for the term information overload. Proposals have been made to handle paralysis of action in health care by too much information.³

It is a fact however that online data sources and open access publishing has radically changed the knowledge landscape. The societal impact of Open Access has been strong, in particular non academic dissemination of knowledge advancing citizen science initiatives and providing a level playing field for researchers in developing countries who previously struggled with many financial constraints.⁴

Year 2017 marks a turning point in the history of JRCS as from this year it will be available full text online at Sri Lanka Journals Online (SLJOL). We are grateful to Sioux Cumming at International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) and Amila Tennakoon at National Science Foundation (NSF) for helping us to get JRCS online.

SLJOL has now 75 journals listed with a considerable proportion represented by medicine and allied sciences related journals. It is heartening to note that many medical professionals embarking on research and SLJOL platform making the findings available to a wider audience. Ministry of Health initiative to make financial allocation for medical officers who are engaged in research certainly has spread the idea of research and


has lead many doctors to initiate research work, though not all have resulted in publications.

At JRCS we would like to see the findings from new research not only being published, but read and put into practice. It is not uncommon for researchers to lament that their research findings are not seeing the due application in real life.

Without mechanisms for filtering the overload with irrelevant data, close and continuing dialogue between researchers, policy makers and programme implementers, most valuable research would not see the fruitful outcome the researcher wanted them to be.⁵ It is a waste if a research paper only serves the purpose of lengthening the Curriculum Vitae, makes the researcher suitable for a promotion or a grant or merely contribute to the information overload.

Making research findings available through wider news media in local languages will make them more visible to policy makers and general public and unable to be ignored. Many leading scientific journals have made it a practice now to release filtered highlights from each published issue via traditional and new social media platforms with links to original work for interested reader. Science popularizing subcommittee of Sri Lanka Association for Advancement of Science (SLASS) is one focal point that this task could be coordinated. Each organization that publishes a Journal could make it a standard practice and a responsibility to spread the word of new findings through these portals.

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