

Not Today



This 2019, I was privileged to represent the Philippine Journal of Pathology in two local conventions: the 1st Philippine Association of Medical Journal Editors (PAMJE) Convention and the 68th Annual Convention of the Philippine Society of Pathologists, Inc., (PSP Inc.).

Within weeks of each other, the dual engagement made me realize how our appreciation for research has been evolving for the better. Local journals may not necessarily be in their best condition at this time, but there are signs of life at the very least.

At the PAMJE convention, I discussed the workflow of manuscripts from submission to publication as part of journal management. Editors from other local health journals joined the event to share not only best practices but also the collective travails of a small but growing lot of advocates for ethical scholarly publication. At this year's PSP convention, I was given an opportunity to give tips to our colleagues for maximizing publication potential, i.e., practical advice to guide pathologist researchers on how to increase the chances of becoming part of the scientific body of literature (Table 1).

Table 1. Tips to maximize publication potential

- Tip 1:* Choose a topic of scientific interest.
- Tip 2:* Determine article type and follow reporting guidelines.
- Tip 3:* Select the most appropriate journal for your work.
- Tip 4:* Read and re-read the Instructions to Authors.
- Tip 5:* Consider the reader; be logical in writing the manuscript.
- Tip 6:* Write clearly.
- Tip 7:* Write briefly and to the point.
- Tip 8:* Learn from the actual experience of the manuscript submission process.

* Based on my presentation at the 68th Annual Convention (<https://bit.ly/PAMJESlides>).

The learning curve for local authors and journals, specifically in Pathology, is steep, but ultimately manageable. It is going to be a grueling climb, but always, my guiding principle is that "nothing worth doing is easy."

PJP, as a prime example, was certainly not a low-hanging fruit.

Facing the difficulties head on, such as aiming to run a journal up to international editorial standards and daring to play in the same arena of giants such as Lancet, BMJ, and PLOS, is a strategic position that not all local journals will take.

Moreover, using an online editorial management platform, marking articles for permanent storage in the world wide web through digital object identifiers (DOIs), and maintaining a 24/7 virtual editorial office, may be the more efficient and effective alternative to the traditional print-only publishing methods, but these strategies certainly do not come for free.

In connection to this, we purposefully distanced ourselves from the usual subscription-based, industry-sponsored, or author-processing-fee-dependent economic sustainability models. We lobbied to the Board that PJP shall be open access and free for both authors and readers. This stand practically meant 100% subsidy by the Society, in order to let PJP focus more on the "ends" rather than the "means."

We are now on our 4th volume since the revival of PJP and you are reading the 1st issue for 2019. To be honest, considering the trends in copy flow (i.e., the number of articles received versus the number of manuscripts published) for the last 2 years, I precariously oscillated between calling it a momentary hiccup and pulling the plug on the project. Truly, with excitement and relief over an issue published, there is worry and uncertainty. Are we already at that critical point? Should we admit defeat, fold up and move on? Is this our last issue? Will PJP still exist tomorrow?

Considering all the investments made and efforts exerted, the continued support of the Board, and the appreciation of authors and readers on what has so far been accomplished, the work is far from finished and I can but say one thing to the face of Death:

"Not today."

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