

A brief history of and an analysis of manuscripts submitted to West African Journal of Medicine. June 2001 – May 2002

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The West African Medical Journal was established by the Colonial Masters in Nigeria before Independence. It was partly funded by the Colonial Administrative Government and companies such as John Holt, Royal Exchange Assurance Corporation, and Pharmaceutical companies such as Glaxo, May & Baker, Wellcome, Roche, Winthrop and Hoechst. This journal which is often confused with our Journal, The West African Journal of Medicine, is no more in circulation.

The records in E. Latunde Odeku Library, College of Medicine, UCH, Ibadan showed that the first issue of the journal was published in July 1927 by the "Colonial Editors" who were the "Directors of Medical Services", for Gambia and Sierra Leone in Freetown, Gold Coast (Now Ghana) in Accra and Nigeria in Lagos¹. After independence and during the post-colonial era, H. Orishejolomi Thomas became the Editor and Chairman of the Editorial Board. The journal was being published then by the College of Medicine, University of Lagos and it was the accredited media for:

- i. The Association of Surgeons of West Africa;
- ii. The Association of Radiologist of West Africa and;
- iii. The Society of Anesthetists of West Africa.

From the records available, it seems that the last issue of the journal before going out of circulation was published in June 1978 under the title of "West African Medical Journal and Nigerian Medical and Dental Practitioner"². Before this however, the journal was appearing irregularly, and it was more like an occasional publication³ than a regular journal.

Since 1978 the journal has stopped being published and it is now no more in existence.

The birth of West African Journal of Medicine (WAJM)

At the 54th Council Meeting of the West African College of Surgeons held on January 27 1980 at the Hotel presidential, Enugu, the Assistant Secretary-General, Dr. Seth Bekoe presented a paper on the publication of the proceedings of annual conferences following the several difficulties the College Secretariat faced in getting conference papers published in Scientific journals. Among the several options proposed was the possibility of a publishing outfit which he expressed in these words:

"...Ideally, the college should either have its own organ for publication or else contract with an already existing journal to publish the annual conference papers."

On accepting the recommendation, the Council set up a Committee for establishing a scientific journal with the following membership:-

Professor A. O. Adesola (Convener)	Nigeria
Dr. Seth Bekoe (Assistant Sec.-Gen.)	Ghana
Professor V. E. Aimakhu	Nigeria
Professor A. Y. Angate	Code d'Ivoire
Dr. J. T. O. Vincent	Sierra Leone.

The Committee commenced work immediately and reported back to Council at its 55th Meeting on January 31 1980 also in Enugu. The Committee observed that the proposal was in accordance with the Revised Constitution of the College and strongly recommended that a journal of a "high scientific standard" be established, as a "bilingual publication" and to be "operated in association with the West African College of Physicians even if the College initiated or owned it", without further delay.

The Committee further recommended that the "initial capital outlay could derive from existing college funds, financial assistance from the West African Postgraduate Medical College (WAPMC) and recurrent expenditures to be met from revenues accruing from advertisements." The involvement of the WAPMC was to be limited to the initial subvention and the provision of space at the WAPMC Secretariat for editorial purposes. It recommended an autonomous Editorial Committee and 2 Editorial Secretaries for Francophone and Anglophone Countries. The business aspect of the journal was to be run separate from the editorial duties. Council accepted the recommendations in principle and directed that they be implemented by the Secretariat of the College.

At the meeting of the Joint Committee on Higher Professional Medical Committee (JCHPME), a committee of the council of WAPMC comprising the representatives of the Colleges and the Secretariat of the West African Health Community held in Freetown, Sierra Leone on February 21 1980, the Secretary-General of the WACS, Professor Olajide O. Ajayi moved a motion for the establishment of *West African Journal of Medicine (WAJ Med)*, a purely scientific publication, to be owned by the West African College of Physician and Surgeon (constituents of the West African Postgraduate Medical College) which could also serve as the official organ of the West African College of Physicians, West African College of Surgeons, West African Pharmaceutical Federation, and West African College of Nursing..."

The framework for the administration of the journal was an Editorial Board constituted by the Councils of the 2 constituent colleges of the WAPMC in such manner as to be broadly representative of all the Faculties and the participating countries, as well as the West African Postgraduate Medical College whose representatives would be the holders of the offices of Secretary and Bursar. There was to be an Editorial

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Committee with the Editor-in-Chief as Chairman with full powers to run the journal and its management. He was to hold office for 5 years only but was eligible for another term of 5 years subject to the unanimous decision of the Councils of the collaborating bodies. An Interim Editorial Committee was to be set up comprising 3 representatives of each of the constituent colleges and the Secretary, WAPMC for 1 year to “prepare a draft constitution for the journal and take appropriate steps for its early publication.” The motion was unanimously adopted.

Council, at its 56th meeting held in Hotel de la Plage, Cotonou on March 15 1980, expressed its satisfaction with the steps taken by the Secretariat in the establishment of the journal and nominated its representatives on the Interim Editorial Committee, namely, Professor A. O. Adesola, Dr. Seth Bekoe, and Professor E. O. Olurin.

The 10th Council meeting of the West African Postgraduate Medical College took place in Lagos, March 19 – 21 1980, and approved that the journal be established on the terms as negotiated. The Interim Editorial Committee (IEC) had its first meeting in June 1980.

On 12 September 1980, Council approved a request from Professor A. O. Adesola that he be withdrawn from the IEC on account of his heavy schedule as Vice-Chancellor, University of Ilorin. Professor Folabi Olumide replaced him.

Certain guidelines were also formulated for the Journal. These are:

- i. It should be bilingual, i.e. both French and English to cater for both Franco-phone and Anglo-phone countries in West Africa;
- ii. It should be named “West African Journal of Medicine”;
- iii. It should be a purely scientific publication;
- iv. It shall be the Journal of WACP, WACS (Constituents Colleges of WAPMC);
- v. An initial financial deposit be made from both colleges for the Journal to take off.

The first issue of the Journal appeared in October 1981 and it featured six scientific papers and one case report.

Progress report

The Journal has been waxing stronger and stronger and has improved over the years both in content and appearance. It was recognised in 1991 by Index Medicus and Congressional Information Service Inc, and it has maintained quarterly publication since 1983. Each edition now carries between 25 to 30 articles. The size of the Journal now is A4. The time from the acceptance to publication of an article in many cases is about 9 months.

The Journal is supported by contributions from the two Colleges that own the Journal and minimal levy from those whose articles have been accepted for publication. This levy is to subsidize the cost of reprints and translation of abstracts to either English or French, depending on the language of the body of the article.

Articles submitted from various specialties

In a 12-month period from June 2001 to May 2002, 196 articles were submitted. Ninety-four of these (48%) were accepted. Medical disciplines with the highest submissions are

Table 1 Number of articles submitted to and accepted by WAJM from various specialties (June 2001 – May 2002 (12 Months))

Specialties	Submitted articles	Accepted article
Obstetrics & Gynaecology	21(10.7%)	4(4.3%)
Ophthalmology	11(5.6%)	5(5.3%)
General Medicine	20(10.2%)	10(10.6%)
Orthopaedics	22(11.2%)	13(13.8%)
General Surgery	11(5.6%)	3(3.2%)
Epidemiology	9(4.6%)	3(3.2%)
Cardiology	7(3.6%)	3(3.2%)
Neuro Surgery	6(3.0%)	6(6.4%)
General Paediatrics	12(6.2%)	5(5.3%)
Pediatrics Surgery	6(3.0%)	1(1.1%)
ENT	5(2.5%)	3(3.2%)
Trauma	3(1.5%)	1(1.1%)
Anaesthesia	5(2.5%)	3(3.2%)
Psychiatry	11(5.6%)	5(5.3%)
Plastic Surgery	2(1.0%)	2(2.0%)
Burns	1(0.5%)	1(1.1%)
Medical Education	6(3.0%)	4(4.3%)
Dentistry	5(2.5%)	4(4.3%)
Haematology	2(1.0%)	1(1.1%)
Urology	7(3.6%)	3(3.2%)
Vascular Surgery	1(0.5%)	1(1.1%)
Hospital Management	1(0.5%)	1(1.1%)
Cardiothoracic Surgery	2(1.0%)	2(2.0%)
Chest Medicine	1(0.5%)	0
Environmental	1(0.5%)	0
Pathology	2(1.0%)	2(2.0%)
Bacteriology	3(1.5%)	2(2.0%)
Virology	4(2.0%)	1(1.1%)
Therapeutics	2(1.0%)	1(1.1%)
Chemical Pathology	1(0.5%)	1(1.1%)
Radiology	1(0.5%)	1(1.1%)
Neurology	1(0.5%)	0
Nephrology	2(1.0%)	1(1.1%)
Dermatology	2(1.0%)	1(1.1%)
Medical Audit	1(0.5%)	0
Total	196(99.9%)	94(100%)

1. Accepted papers are 48% (94 out of 196 submitted).
2. Disciplines with highest submissions are Orthopaedics (11.2%), Obstetrics & Gynaecology (10.7%) and General Medicine (10.2%) in that order.
3. Disciplines with highest published articles are Orthopaedics (13.8%), General Medicine (10.6%), Neurosurgery (6.4%), Ophthalmology (5.3%), General Paediatrics (5.3%) and Psychiatry (5.3%).

All the accepted papers needed some modifications. Three were advised to be converted to “Letter to the Editor” one of these three was withdrawn because the authors were not satisfied with the decision. Two accepted papers for correction have not been returned.

Orthopaedics (11.2%), Obstetrics and Gynaecology (10.7%) and General Medicine (10.2%) (See Table 1).

Medical disciplines with the highest published articles are Orthopaedics (13.8%). General Medicine (10.6%), Neurosurgery (6.4%) Ophthalmology (5.3%), General Paediatrics (5.3%) and Psychiatry (5.3) – (See Table 1).

All the accepted papers during this period under review needed some modifications. Three were to be converted to “Letter to the Editor” One of these three was withdrawn because the authors were not satisfied with the decision. Two

Table 2 Number of articles submitted to and accepted by WAJM from various institutions (June 2001 – May 2002) (12 months)

Name of Institution	Total articles submitted	Accepted articles
UCH, Ibadan	67(34.1%)	39(41.4%)
UIITH, Ilorin	17(8.7%)	12(12.7%)
OAUTH, Ile-Ife	17(8.7%)	5(5.3%)
ABUTH, Zaria	8(4.1%)	0
ABUTH, Kaduna	1(0.5%)	0
NAUTH, Nnewi	7(3.6%)	0
UNTH, Enugu	5(2.6%)	2(2.1%)
USA	6(3.0%)	3(3.2%)
Bulgaria	1(0.5%)	1(1.1%)
Saudi Arabia	5(2.6%)	5(5.3%)
Ghana	9(4.6%)	7(7.4%)
Sierra Leone	1(0.5%)	1(1.1%)
Cot'd Voire	1(0.5%)	0
JUTH, Jos	8(4.1%)	4(4.2%)
Jos	1(0.5%)	1(1.1%)
UDFUTH, Sokoto	3(1.5%)	1(1.1%)
UMTH, Maiduguri	2(1.0%)	1(1.1%)
National Hospital, Abuja	1(0.5%)	1(1.1%)
Abuja State House Clinic	1(0.5%)	0
LUTH, Lagos	3(1.5%)	1(1.1%)
Nigerian Institute of Medical Research	3(1.5%)	0
Ebonyi State UTH, Abakaliki	1(0.5%)	1(1.1%)
OOOUTH, Sagamu	12(6.1%)	3(3.2%)
UPTH, Port Harcourt	7(3.6%)	4(4.2%)
Federal Medical Centre, Abeokuta	1(0.5%)	1(1.1%)
Lagos General Hospital	1(0.5%)	0
LASU, Lagos	1(0.5%)	0
Nigerian Airforce, Ikeja	1(0.5%)	0
AKTH, Kano	1(0.5%)	0
BUTH, Kano	2(1.0%)	1(1.1%)
UBTH, Benin City	2(1.0%)	0
Total	196(99.8%)	94(100%)

1. The institutions that submitted the highest number of manuscripts are UCH, Ibadan (34.1%), UIITH, Ilorin (8.7%), OAUTH, Ile-Ife (8.7%) and OOOUTH, Sagamu, (6.1%).
2. The institutions that are more published are UCH, Ibadan (41.4%), UIITH, Ilorin (12.7%) and OAUTH, Ile-Ife (5.3%).
3. From outside of Africa 12 articles (6.1%) were received and 9 of these were published. That is 75% of the articles submitted from outside Africa and (9.6%) of all the manuscripts published.

accepted papers for correction were not returned. Another two already accepted were withdrawn because the author sent them to two Journals including this, simultaneously.

Articles submitted by various Institutions

During this period under review, 196 articles were submitted to WAJM to be considered for publication. The highest number of articles were submitted by University College Hospital (UCH) Ibadan (34.1%), followed by University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital – (8.7%), Obafemi Awolowo Teaching Hospital Complex (OAUTHIC) Ile-Ife (8.7%) and Olabisi Olanbanjo University Teaching Hospital (OOOUTH) Sagamu, (6.1%) (See Table 2). The institutions that are more published in the Journal during this period are UCH, Ibadan ((41.4%), UIITH, Ilorin (12.7%) and OAUTH, Ile-Ife (5.3%) – See Table 2.

Twelve articles out of a total of 196, (6.1%) were received from outside Africa and 9 of these were published. That is 75% of the total articles submitted from outside Africa and 9.6% of all manuscripts published during this period under consideration (See Table 2).

Conclusion

Most of the articles received are clinical research papers, and they cover the gamut of medical sciences. However more laboratory and animal research which are deficient in the articles we receive should be encouraged. The deficiency in this group of publication can be attributed to lack of funding and facilities for animal and laboratory studies.

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Reference

1. The West African Medical Journal Nos. 1– 3, 1927 – 30
2. West African Medical Journal Vol. xxiv, No. 3, June 1978