



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Message from

DR HUSSEIN A. GEZAIRY

REGIONAL DIRECTOR

WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

to the

**THIRD REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEDICAL JOURNALS
IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

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Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Third Regional Conference on Medical Journals in the Eastern Mediterranean Region of WHO. The conference has been organized by the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, represented by Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, and the Undersecretary of Research, Health and Biomedical Information Department, Islamic Republic of Iran. Let me thank the Ministry of Health and Medical Education for their support for this conference and, in particular, our host, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, whose staff have worked so hard to make it all happen. Let me also thank the British Council, the UNICEF/UNDP/WHO/World Bank Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases and the Iranian Academy of Medical Sciences for their support, all of which has contributed to enabling the holding of this conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Medical journals have long played an important role in health care delivery. Medical journals serve a variety of purposes of course, but among the most basic and important is the improvement of patient care and of systems for delivery of care and continuing education of health care personnel. Documentation of evidence on best practices, which constitutes evidence-based medicine, can only be found in medical journals. Doctors on the frontline of clinical and public health practice have long relied on medical journals to keep them up to date on the latest research and on developments in their field of practice. More recently, health professionals have looked to the journals to take the lead in demonstrating how that research translates into practice and what the evidence is for making change in established practice. Bridging the knowledge gap, now often termed the 'know-do' gap, has become more feasible and possible through better publishing of and better access to medical journals.

The editors of medical journals have an important role to play in the management of the knowledge that is submitted to them for publication. They have a responsibility towards their readers to ensure the quality of what is published, which includes the mechanism of peer review, and ultimately they have also a responsibility towards patients, to encourage the translation of what is published into better practice.

Dear Colleagues,

For the past 10 years the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has supported and promoted the development of medical journals in the Region in a variety of ways. Training workshops have been supported for researchers in development of research proposals and scientific writing, and for editors of medical journals in the various aspects their work entails. Some 23 such national training workshops were held in ten countries between 1997 and the end of 2005. Since our last conference we have started an initiative to add the abstracts to the Index Medicus for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, which will increase the visibility of medical journals from the Region on the Internet and in searching international databases. A portal for regional electronic medical journals was launched which has allowed, for the first time, one-stop access on the Internet to medical journals published in the Region.

We have also made an agreement to allow searching of the content of the Index Medicus and electronic medical journals through Google Scholar. This has enabled equal visibility of the regional journals with international journals indexed in international indexing and abstracting services.

During the conference you will be informed of our discussions with Google to digitize all medical journals from the Region and make them available on the Internet. With your consensus and agreement these journals will be digitally archived on Google servers and our servers at the Regional Office for open access. What is more important is that these journals will be part of a global repository of health and biomedical medical literature which will form an integral part of the Global Health Library that the Organization as a whole is pursuing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The proposal in 2002 from the Saudi Medical Journal to hold a regional conference on medical journals coincided happily with our own plans and many of you attended the first regional conference held at the Regional Office in Cairo in October 2003. The second conference was hosted by the Saudi Medical Journal and King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, in Riyadh in October 2004.

Among the outcomes of these conferences was the establishment of the Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors (EMAME) and we look forward to continued collaboration with the Association. Since the last meeting in 2004, an EMAME website has been established together with a listserv for discussion and exchange of experience and ideas on issues pertaining to medical journals and medical journal publishing. The Regional Office will continue to support these initiatives. At the same time, we must not rest on our achievements so far. We need to work on increasing the membership of EMAME, on promoting quality in research and publishing, on raising and discussing ethical issues in research and in publishing, and on promoting wider discussion of issues that concern editors in the Region. We look forward to further collaboration with EMAME in developing guidelines for editors and

training modules for editors, reviewers and editorial staff. And we look forward to sharing experiences and collaboration with other organizations, such as the Forum for African Medical Editors (FAME). Networks such as EMAME and FAME have much to offer and are a valuable resource. I hope very much that you will all continue to participate and increase the momentum that has started.

Once again, I thank our hosts, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, and I wish you all a successful conference.