



*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

**Message from**

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**WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

**SECOND REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEDICAL JOURNALS IN THE WHO  
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

**Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 10–12 October 2004**

Your Royal Highness Prince.....

Your Excellency Minister of Health

Your Excellency

Colleagues

It gives me great pleasure to address the Second Regional Conference on Medical Journals in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region which has been jointly organized by the Saudi Medical Journal and WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean in collaboration with ISESCO and King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology. It is an honour for the Regional Office to partner such organizations and institutions in convening this Conference, building on the success of the first conference which was held in Cairo in 2003.

The interest of the Regional Office in health information management and dissemination in general and in medical journals publishing, in particular stems from a number of reasons.

1. The health sector is information-driven, with information playing a major role in the quality and efficiency of health care and health care delivery;
2. Access to health information in general has improved with development of modern information and communications technology, however, access to specific information has not really improved much; and
3. The amount of health information available, published or unpublished, has increased exponentially, but quality control and assistance in finding the right information are still lacking.

The Regional Office is committed to supporting medical journal publishing in the Region as a way to communicate and disseminate health and biomedical information in order both to improve the quality of published information and to make it more accessible and available. Medical journals, we believe, have a great role in documentation of the results of personal, institutional and national experience and dissemination to the widest possible range of audiences. This dissemination plays a role in the process of learning from others and avoiding mistakes. I would like to urge all authors and editors of medical journals in the Region to work hard on documenting their national experience, be it success or failure, in medical journals of the Region. Having this published in journals of the Region is the only way to make the journals relevant, acceptable and recognized by the world. An internationally recognized journal is one that publishes high quality research, that corresponds to its environment and that responds to the needs of its readers.

We all recognize that health and medical research faces many constraints in the Region, which makes our researchers less productive and our research products of lower quality. We will not go into the details of the reasons, but one important factor is the absence of a research culture and tradition from many institutions in the Region. Building up this culture requires changes in the policies and methods in our academic and research institutions, and consequently changes in the whole health care sector. The sharing of information and experience and improving the skills required for that are among the changes that need to be introduced. Cultural, financial, institutional and personal constraints should not stop us from continuing to conduct research and publishing results as a way to learn and improve the quality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our partnership with the Saudi Medical Journal and our celebration of its 25th Anniversary cannot be better demonstrated than the holding of this Conference here in Riyadh. I would like to express my sincere congratulations to all those who are working on publishing the Saudi Medical Journal. The journal has shown and proved itself to be a shining example of clear vision and commitment to high quality information dissemination. The political commitment of its leadership coupled with the commitment of the scientists and researchers who contribute and of the managers of the Journal have resulted in sustained and high quality published information at the international level. The Saudi Medical Journal is one of the few journals that are indexed and abstracted in international databases and systems. It is one of the few journals that are electronically available and free on the internet. It is one of few journals that have continued without interruption for the last 25 years. It is a journal that has never compromised quality for the sake of any personal or institutional interest. It is a journal that has been applying and following the highest attainable standards for both content and format. All that has made it an international journal with a regional scope.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the themes of this conference is ethics. The publishing of medical research is to a great extent based on the trust that all ethical requirements have been met, both during the conduct of the research and in the subsequent publication of the results. While unethical practices among the medical research community exist everywhere, fortunately they are very much the exception. It is, however, a theme that is increasingly relevant in a world where the pressures to publish are also increasing, and a theme to which all our regional editors must be vigilant.

Our own journal, the Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal, as a younger sister journal to SMJ, has, since its inception, worked hard to establish and maintain high standards in the publishing of quality information. Success has come from its commitment to be a regional journal that applies international standards. Ethical standards of research and publishing are

maintained by the staff of the journal itself, as well as its reviewers and its authors. The EMHJ will continue its efforts to ensure that research papers published in the journal meet all ethical criteria so that its readers can be assured that what they read can be relied upon.

In our Region we need more such journals. We need to put ourselves on the global map of biomedical literature. This conference, which we hope will continue as an annual event, the training courses that the Regional Office conducts and supports for researchers and for editors of medical journals, and the establishment of the Eastern Mediterranean Association of Medical Editors (EMAME) as a regional body to support and harmonize the efforts of medical journal editors, are all steps in the right direction. We will continue to support these efforts and to enhance them.

Finally, let me wish you a very pleasant stay in this beautiful city of Riyadh and a very successful conference.

Peace be upon you.