

CHALLENGES TO START A NEW BIOMEDICAL JOURNAL IN PAKISTAN

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Start-up with creativity always leads to new learning opportunities with excellent outcomes in the biomedical field. However, starting a biomedical journal in Pakistan is a daunting task indeed. There is no doubt that Pakistan has a strong and growing scientific community but it will be unfair to negate that there are still many hurdles that must be overcome to create a journal that is truly successful and respected within the biomedical research community.

One of the biggest challenges to starting a biomedical journal in Pakistan is the lack of funding and human resources. Unlike more established journals, new journals must typically rely on the support of a small group of researchers who are willing to invest their time and resources into the journal. Another challenge is the lack of awareness and interest in scientific research in Pakistan. While there are certainly a number of researchers and institutions in Pakistan that are interested in biomedical research, there are still many who are not. This means that new journals may struggle to find a large enough audience to support their efforts.

Furthermore, starting a biomedical journal in Pakistan requires a significant amount of technical expertise and knowledge. It is not simply a matter of collecting research papers and publishing them online; journals must also adhere to a number of international standards and protocols like COPE and ICMJE to ensure the quality and integrity of their contents. This requires significant knowledge and experience in areas such as peer review, data management, research publication, and manuscript preparation.

Finally, there is the challenge of competition. There are already a number of established biomedical journals in Pakistan, as well as many international journals that are widely read and respected within the research community. This means that new journals must work hard to distinguish themselves from the competition and establish a strong reputation within the community.

Although starting a new biomedical journal is no doubt a challenging endeavor, however with careful planning and execution, such challenges can be overcome with the following strategies.

Secure funding and resources: One of the biggest challenges to starting a biomedical journal is the lack of funding and resources. The initial plan should be to arrange to fund a naïve biomedical journal for the upcoming two years at least. To overcome this challenge, the editorial board should consider seeking out funding from government agencies, private foundations, and other sources. They should also consider collaboration with universities, research institutions, and other organizations to provide technical expertise and support. The concept of charity donation in research should also be inculcated in Pakistan and entrepreneurs should come forward in this noble cause.

Build awareness and interest: To build awareness and interest in a new biomedical journal, editors should engage in outreach activities to promote the journal and its mission. This may be attending conferences and academic events, publishing articles and press releases, developing and utilizing social media links, and engaging with potential authors and reviewers.

Develop technical expertise: Starting a biomedical journal requires significant technical expertise and knowledge. To develop this expertise, editors should consider partnering with experienced journal editors and publishers, as well as participating in training programs and workshops. Physical and online certification courses in medical journalism will be of great help from this perspective.

Establish a strong reputation: To establish a strong reputation within the research community, newly established biomedical journals should strive to publish high-quality research that is rigorously reviewed and edit-

ed. They should also develop a strong brand identity and promote their journal through social media, email newsletters, and other channels. However, this is not an easy task as researchers are mostly reluctant to publish their articles in new journals mainly because these journals are not accredited with PMDC and HEC Pakistan. Both these regulatory bodies should devise strategies to support newly establishing journals in their accreditation process to maintain a high threshold for quality publications.

Differentiate from competitors: To differentiate from competitors, new biomedical journals should strive to offer unique and innovative features, such as open-access publishing, multimedia content, special sections like infographics, perspective, teaching and learning moments, or specialized focus areas. They should also focus on building strong relationships with authors and reviewers and providing excellent customer service to all stakeholders.

These strategies will help editors to overcome the challenges of starting a new biomedical journal and establish a successful and respected publication that contributes to the advancement of biomedical research.

The following execution plan will help the editorial board to accomplish its objectives:

Define the scope and mission of the journal: The first step in starting a new biomedical journal is to define the scope and mission of the journal. This includes deciding on the areas of focus, such as specific diseases or therapies, and the types of articles that will be published, such as original research, reviews, meta-analysis, clinical trials, or case studies.

Identify the target audience: Once the scope and mission of the journal have been defined, the next step is to identify a target audience. This includes determining the types of researchers, clinicians, and other healthcare professionals who are most likely to be interested in the journal.

Develop a business model for the journal: Starting a new biomedical journal requires a significant amount of funding and resources. To secure these resources, researchers must develop a comprehensive business model that outlines the costs associated with starting and running the journal, as well as potential sources of funding and revenue.

Build a team: Starting a biomedical journal requires a team of experts with a wide range of skills, including editorial, technical, computer, and business expertise. Editors and managerial teams should consider partnering with experienced journal editors, publishers, and technical staff to help develop and launch the journal.

Establish editorial policies and procedures: To ensure the quality and integrity of the content published in the journal, it is important to establish clear editorial poli-

cies and procedures. This includes developing guidelines for manuscript submission, peer review, and editorial decision-making. All these policies should be explicit and well-documented on the official website of the journal.

Build a submission and review platform: A key component of starting a new biomedical journal is building a submission and review platform that is easy to use for authors, reviewers, and editors. This can include utilizing existing publishing platforms or developing a custom platform specifically for the journal. Online Journal System (OJS) is offered by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan to almost every journal for this purpose. All that editors need to train their human resources on OJS.

Approval and accreditation with media and print regulatory authorities to get International Standard Book Number (ISBN) or Online Standard Book Number.

Launch the journal: Once all of the necessary components have been developed and tested, it is time to launch the journal. This includes publishing the first issue of the journal, promoting it to potential authors and readers, and beginning the process of soliciting and reviewing manuscripts.

Monitor and evaluate: Finally, it is important to monitor and evaluate the success of the new biomedical journal. This includes tracking metrics such as submission and acceptance rates, citations, and reader engagement, and making adjustments to the journal's policies and procedures as needed to ensure continued success.

To get a digital object identifier (DOI) for the articles: This will enhance the visibility of articles globally.

Accreditation and Indexation for impact factors to augment the quality standards.

This execution plan will greatly boost the editorial team's efforts to launch and keep viable a new biomedical journal in Pakistan that contributes to the advancement of biomedical research and healthcare in the region.

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