The role of scientific journals in advancing continuing professional development

O papel das revistas científicas na progressão do desenvolvimento profissional contínuo

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Lifelong learning is a professional commitment of every ophthalmologist and lies at the core of continuing professional development (CPD). A demonstrable and ideally measurable CPD is key to prove the profession's accountability and meet societal expectations. Effective CPD requires professional skills that extend beyond medical expertise such as leadership, scholarship, professionalism, health advocacy, health systems insight, information technology, communication skills, and team building. [1,2]

The history of scientific journals, as research periodical and systematic publications to further the progress of science dates back to 1665. Peer review as a guaranty to maintain quality, became gradually mandatory after the mid-20th. Journal articles vary in format and among the many, video papers are a relatively recent addition with good acceptance in ophthalmology. They combine an online video demonstration of a new procedural technique with its written description. Without compromising peer-reviewing standards, the electronic publication of scholarly scientific research offers a number of benefits such as the possibility of ahead of print publication, easy availability of supplementary materials (data, graphics and video included) with credit award opportunities, lower cost, faster access and wider dissemination with more effective outreach to healthcare professionals, especially those in underdeveloped countries. [3]

Scientific journals support competency based CPD by a) assisting the busy practicing ophthalmologist in managing information and leading an evidence informed practice by timely applying accurate and targeted information at the point of care; b) enabling publication and peer review of scientific articles, as measurable learning strategies demonstrating CPD progression; c) developing clinical appraisal skills and problem solving; d) facilitating "tree like" clinical learning; e) enhancing self-directed, practice based and interactive learning; and e) fostering demonstrable self assessment and reflective practice. Writing or peer reviewing an article and journal clubs stand out from the various CPD activities enabled by scientific journals. Journal clubs started as a profession driven lifelong learning method based on peer case-discussion at the clinical setting to explore novel techniques and treatments and learn about pathology discoveries. Currently, they are one of the preferred learning methods to develop critical appraisal skills conducive to improve clinical thinking and problem solving at the point of care. Online journal clubs, as those based on social media such as Twitter have been assuming an increasingly relevant role in engaging participants to interactively gauge their clinical practice on best evidence. [4,5] (Figure 1)

The "Revista Brasileira de Oftalmologia" (Rev. Bras. Oftalmol.) ISSN 0034-7280 is an indexed scientific journal of ophthalmology that has been bimonthly published uninterruptedly since 1942 by the Brazilian Society of Ophthalmology. With the mission of collaborating in the dissemination of practice, research and teaching of ophthalmology and related specialties, this scientific journal embraces content beyond medical expertise. The Rev. Bras. Oftalmol. represents a large part of the history of the Brazilian ophthalmology publication and has already published around 3,317 research articles, from which 1,660 are available in the Latin American Health Sciences (Lilacs) literature database. The Rev. Bras. Oftalmol. offers a print run of 5,000 printed copies for ophthalmologists, national and international libraries and has made its articles available electronically since 2004.[6]

During 2007 – 2018 the Rev. Bras. Oftalmol. has accomplished 68 editions, published 865 documents in English and/or in Portuguese and generated 16210 references. The global distribution, as shown by authors' affiliation countries, shows the highest notoriety for Brazilian authors, who have contributed with 746 papers. North American authors followed with 20 papers; Turkey with 6, Canada with 4, Italy and UK with 2 each, and Argentina, Chile, Peru, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Spain, Japan, Iran Germany, Switzerland, and Republic of Serbia with one each. In 2018, 64 citable articles were published. The 34999 paper accesses registered in October, 2018 translate the readers' high interest in the journal content.[7]

Nonetheless ancient in their inception and reputable service, scientific journals were definitely unsurpassed by the years. Scientific journals have mastered the ability to evolve and benefit from the incorporation of technology either by electronically receiving, processing and peer-reviewing manuscript submissions as by working as interactive and collaborative learning platforms underpinning good practice in CPD.

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I acknowledge the honor of having been invited to write this editorial for the Rev. Bras. Oftalmol., a unique global scientific periodic in ophthalmology sharing the Lusophone fraternity. Albeit an unquestionable long established peer respectability, the perspective of so effective potential applications to assist in the CPD of ophthalmologists with a global span is an exciting venture to pursue. The Rev. Bras. Oftalmol. Leadership creativity to upscale the journal outreach and line it up among the best effective educational tools and learning methods in CPD has already set sail!

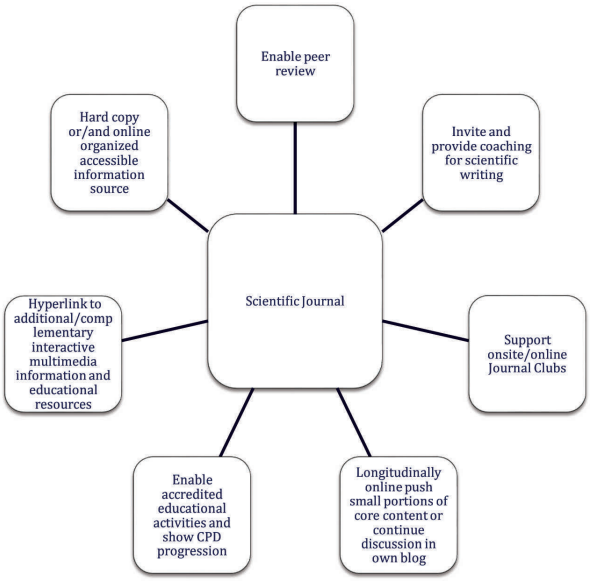

Figure 1: CPD activities offered by a scientific journal. Beyond a repository of organized information, the scientific journal can work as a versatile educational tool, useful to apply in best practice continuing learning environments. Journals support an effective management of information at the point of care by promoting self-directed, work place based learning, networking and collaboration.

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