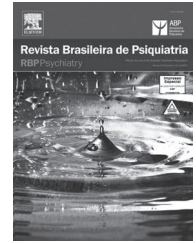




Revista Brasileira de Psiquiatria

RBP Psychiatry

Official Journal of the Brazilian Psychiatric Association
Volume 34 • Number 1 • March/2012



EDITORIAL

The role of the World Psychiatric Association in facilitating development of psychiatric publications from low- and middle-income countries

A major issue for the discipline of Psychiatry is the paucity of credible psychiatric publications from low- and middle-income countries (LAMIC). The vast majority of psychiatry publications emanate from developed countries. This renders the developing world underserved and potentially subordinate to the developed world's agenda and priorities. This has been recognized and subjected to formal study, which established the so called 5/95 gap,¹ whereby 95% of indexed journals emanate from the developed world. Such research arose from a task force appointed by the Publications program within the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), itself inspired by research from the World Health Organization (led by Shekhar Saxena) that established the "10/90 divide" in publication of research articles.¹ Subsequent to this research, a decision was taken to actively facilitate development of psychiatric journals from low and middle income countries with the intention of enhancing their potential for indexation in major databases.² To this end, a series of workshops were held at various WPA meetings.^{3,4} At the 15th World Congress of Psychiatry held in Buenos Aires (September 2011), the third workshop in this series was hosted by the WPA Publications program^{3,4} with the purpose - in this instance - of evaluating and providing guidance to South American psychiatric journals with potential for indexing in databases, such as Medline and the Web of ScienceSM (formerly the Institute for Scientific Information®). Previous workshops involved journals from Europe, Africa and Asia^{3,4} - several of which subsequently achieved indexation in either Medline or WoS or both (*African Journal of Psychiatry* - South Africa; *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* - India; *The East Asian Archives of Psychiatry* - Hong Kong; *Klinik Psokofarmakoloji Bulteni* - Turkey).

Most recent research has established the existence of some 235 publications related to psychiatry, which are indexed in either Medline or the WoS.² The number of indexed psychiatry journals from low- and middle-income countries (LAMIC) has certainly increased (e.g., from 9 of 222 in 2007 to 13 of 235 in 2009),² with a number of these publications

having participated in the WPA facilitated workshops. However, despite the increase in number, the percentage of LAMIC indexed publications relative to the total number of indexed publications has not changed significantly and remains at just over 5%.² Indexation would appear to be a proxy for quality, and there is an existing hegemony of databases that confer this. However, the emergence of developing world scientific databases such as SciELO (www.scielo.br/rbp) - which whilst Brazilian in origin increasingly extends beyond Brazil into South America together with potential partnerships in Africa (specifically South Africa) - portends the creation of databases that without sacrificing quality will be more orientated towards the developing world. The fact that only about 20% of all psychiatric publications appear in the major databases⁵ with approximately only 5% originating from the developing world² does not diminish the significance of the non-indexed publications. These publications have undoubtedly the potential to contribute to the discipline at a local level. Whether if such contribution can be meaningful without indexation remains to be understood. Intuitively, one may not surmise and if indeed so - this would require remediation, not simply to attain indexation, but ultimately to meet the minimum standards required for credibility and thus utility. In this regard, the workshops facilitated by the WPA Publications program task force have demonstrated a measure of success, not only to the participant journals that have subsequently achieved indexation, but also in providing a forum for supporting editors who have a true passion and commitment to support the dissemination of local content - usually with very limited resources and without formal training or assistance. With a global agenda for the discipline of Psychiatry, the WPA and other international organisations have an important role to play in actively facilitating a process that appears to represent a relatively inexpensive way of enhancing patient outcomes - healthy, vibrant and credible local publications. A start has been made, and one would hope that what has been achieved to date will serve as a basis for further development of the initiative.

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* Modest

** Significant

*** Significant: Amounts given to the author's institution or to a colleague for research in which the author has participation, not directly to the author.

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