Editorial

Getting the right message out, at the right time, to the right audience

OPEN ACCESS

Received: Apr 30, 2019

Accepted: May 7, 2019

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Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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The *Journal of Global Health Science (JGHS)* could not have been ‘born’ at the right time. The field of global health has become complex, intertwined, blossoming, and sometimes, confusing — confusing because of the plethora of information, what many might term ‘information overload,’ facilitated by the ‘almighty’ internet! While a large dose of information is good, in the sense that it provides the reader with choices, it can sometimes become toxic to the uninformed reader. Former Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health, Julio Frenk, noted in a discussion with media mogul and philanthropist Ted Turner, that one of the key challenges of global health is the problem of communication. Frenk noted that to complete the knowledge circle which begins with research, involves getting the word out by translating that knowledge and putting it out through the right and proper communication channels. He underscored “Public health officials have long struggled with ways not just to get the word out, but to do so in a way that changes people’s behavior.”¹

Why is this perspective critical for the mission of the *JGHS* which aims to advance research to support policy, practice, and education in the field of global health by publishing papers of high scientific quality? Drawing on Julio Frenk’s views, the critical lessons for *JGHS* are “good science,” “proper communication of results,” and to the “right audience.” This editorial argues that as a new journal, *JGHS* must strive to practice these attributes.

So, let us start with ‘good science’. What is good science? Lagowski² in an editorial published in the *Journal of Chemical Education* listed three attributes of good science — excellence, pertinence and appropriateness. The *JGHS* must first strive to exhibit ‘excellence.’ The world is currently inundated with a large plethora of journals which have become known in academic circles as “Predatory Journals” whose mission is not driven by the desire to practice good science but the desire to make money. As a member of the editorial board it is my fervent desire that we will hold on strictly to the tenets of practicing good science. It is through the practice of good science that *JGHS* can get the right information out unblemished to effect change in the world.

The second attribute of good science which *JGHS* must uphold as it embarks on its mission of advancing research to support policy, practice, and education in the field of global health, is ‘pertinence.’ *JGHS* must ensure that the research that it publishes is of policy relevance and has applicability in advancing knowledge that will help improve health or may advance knowledge towards the discovery of interventions that will improve the general health and well-being of the population. Dobrow et al.³ through a comprehensive review of published

research and donor justification for investments in research concluded that “Research relevance seems increasingly important in justifying research investments and guiding strategic research planning.” The importance of relevance or pertinence in health research is particularly important because it has to do with the health and well-being of populations and therefore research should have applicability in helping to find critical solutions to deal with global health problems.

The third attribute of good science that must engage *JGHS* is ‘appropriateness.’ The concept of appropriateness is much more difficult to define. Because of the fluidity of the definition, some researchers have resorted to criterion-based standard classification or a standard method of enquiry. Thus, appropriateness in clinical and public health is often related to the adoption of what is sometimes christened “gold” standard methods, the properties of which must be reliability and validity.⁴ Thus, one is often classified as practicing good science if one uses tested and validated methods of enquiry which are expected to lead to conclusions that make sense and that agree with generally accepted standards. It is therefore expected that *JGHS* will ensure that authors practice good science by adopting methods that are deemed to generate good science. Of course, good science also promotes the generation of novel and untested methods that have good promise for innovation. The other issue that relates to appropriateness which I must emphasize has to do with fit for purpose. Fit in this case relates to the type of articles published. Articles that are published by the journal must fit its editorial policy and the focus of the journal and these must be strictly adhered. Therefore, the journal must not allow itself to be stampeded into publishing articles that are not a good fit for it.

Beyond the issue of good science is the whole issue of appropriate communication. As a scientific journal one would expect that *JGHS* will adopt the highest standards of scientific writing so that results are communicated appropriately. Clear articulation of the problem being investigated, appropriately grounding the research in relevant literature, reflecting on debates in the field, providing theoretical insights on the topic, appropriately reporting results and using the appropriate jargon in the field, are all good standards that the journal must strive to uphold. *JGHS* must ensure that authors comply to help the journal compete effectively with the highly esteemed journals in the field.

Finally, *JGHS* must develop a deliberate policy to determine who its audience is. *JGHS* must ensure a strong editorial support system to ensure it produces good quality products to attract good readership. As a scientific journal that aims to join the league of high impact scientific outlets, the editorial policy must ensure that the journal upholds the highest scientific rigor.

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