Journey of a Journal: the use of a Student-Run Peer Reviewed Journal as a Learning Tool

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Abstract

Background: Publication of peer-reviewed research is the cornerstone of the scientific process. The GMC’s Outcomes for Graduates states: newly qualified doctors must be able to apply scientific method and approaches to medical research; with additional points for foundation programme applications awarded for publications with PubMed identifications. However, only 14% of medical students publish whilst at medical school. Major challenges include limited understanding of the research process in early years, limited opportunities for research projects with a good chance of publication and competition with established researchers for publication. Therefore current methods and opportunities for fostering the skills needed to publish research are inadequate.

Objectives: To provide opportunities for education, training and publication in a student-run, peer-reviewed journal. To lead by example in promoting open access publishing and open source software

Methods: Establishing the journal The Journal of the National Student Association of Medical Research (JSAMR) was set up in 2017 to provide a platform through which students can learn about and gain experience of the publication process. JSAMR provides:

- Authorship - opportunity to publish work not traditionally published in journals in a free, open-access peer-reviewed journal run by and for medical students.
- Education - Educational resources on skills needed to publish research, e.g. writing and peer review, are developed and published by the Education Editors of the journal.
- Editorial Board - recruitment and establishment of a core Editorial team who oversee the journal’s publication processes.
- Peer review - Open recruitment and training for students to peer-review the research of others.

Results: As of February 2020, three issues have been published This includes 30 pieces from 52 authors Peer reviews have been sought from a pool of 229 reviewers In 2019, the website had a total of 79,455 hits from 1,136 unique users.

Conclusions: The infrastructure and policies of JSAMR have proven effective as a model for successful production of a student-run, peer-reviewed journal. Further research should: explore the impact of contributing to JSAMR on the professional development of students involved, determine whether educational resources are improving student understanding of research processes and academic skills.
Author statements

Conflicts of interest statement
The authors are committee members of NSAMR and/or JSAMR.

Authorship statement
All authors fulfill ICMJE authorship criteria, which can be accessed at http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html. All authors have read and approved the final version, and accept responsibility for information published.

Ethics statement
Authors declare that no ethical approval was required for this article.

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