

# Adapting and embracing change in the new normal

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The year 2020 has finally drawn to a close as we look forward to a new year ahead. COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on all aspects of our lives. Significant adjustments were made to both work-related activities and our personal spheres. During this challenging period, the important work at the editorial office of the *Singapore Medical Journal (SMJ)* continued unabated, albeit with necessary adjustments in line with health directives. We would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to all editorial staff, reviewers and Editorial Board members for their continued hard work and support throughout this period of time. We see light at the end of the tunnel, with the local COVID-19 situation under control and the availability of vaccines. We must, however, be vigilant, as the global situation remains a cause for concern.

Last year, the *SMJ* called for academic papers related to COVID-19 (<http://www.smj.org.sg/covid-19>). The COVID-19-related articles that were submitted underwent rapid peer review and early online publication upon acceptance. This was in response to a dynamic situation, with very rapid emergence of new scientific data. We wanted to ensure that our readers would have access to pertinent peer-reviewed publications in real time before the information became dated. We were especially interested in data and opinions that were relevant to clinical practice, which would allow us to contextualise and apply global data and lessons to Singapore. We were heartened by the enthusiastic support from the medical community. Published articles included commentaries,<sup>(1,2)</sup> editorials,<sup>(3)</sup> original articles,<sup>(4)</sup> review articles<sup>(5)</sup> and professional guidelines.<sup>(6)</sup>

As the pandemic continues, the *SMJ* has launched a new time-limited category for article submissions, the COVID-19 Case Files. We are calling for papers that discuss one COVID-19 case or up to a maximum of three cases. These cases should be novel or complex and present diagnostic, therapeutic or management challenges. Details on the article format can be found on the *SMJ* website. Your contributions will enrich scholarship on this ongoing topic and serve as a reference for local and global researchers.

The *SMJ* continuously seeks to serve our readership better both in terms of providing quality academic articles and by improving the means of communications with the wider community. With the advent of social media for dissemination of information, including scientific knowledge, it was timely for the *SMJ* to explore its use to disseminate research works published in our journal, engage readers more actively, and promote authors who chose to publish with us.<sup>(7)</sup> We now have a presence on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. We have also started recording podcasts for selected articles (<http://www.smj.org.sg/podcasts>). In these, authors give a short overview of their research and plans for further studies. Our first podcasts were

for two articles published in the September 2020 issue.<sup>(8,9)</sup> Moving forward, we hope to have two podcasts per issue.

For the new year, the *SMJ* is improving its manuscript submission system to better meet international standards. During submission, authors now need to provide the email addresses of all co-authors and select their contributor role, such as 'writing' or 'conceptualisation'. Each co-author then receives an email and have to confirm that they contributed to the article. This allows the journal to meet the ICMJE (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors) criteria for authorship and helps to protect our authors from potential authorship disputes and scientific fraud.

Another new initiative is the publishing of author profiles in the *SMJ* for original research and review articles. Authors of these article types will be invited to submit a short write-up about themselves with an optional photograph, highlighting their research and achievements. With this, we hope to provide an opportunity for junior doctors to raise their profile and showcase their work.

Over the years, our journal impact factor (IF) has steadily increased.<sup>(10,11)</sup> The 2019 IF was 1.359, with a five-year IF of 1.442. This is a testament to the hard work of the Editorial Board members, editorial staff and the authors who have chosen to publish with us. We will not rest on our laurels and will seek to constantly improve and be relevant to our community. We hope to count on your continued support as we start this new year.

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