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## Editorial

“The Ball in our court”

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It has been a long journey from conception to full gestational period, and here comes the first birth of the Journal of Health Sciences and Practice (JHSP), a peer-reviewed scientific journal publishing high quality contributions in various disciplines of health sciences and the practice of medicine, nationally and internationally. Since the inauguration of the Research and Publication committee of the Plateau State NMA in 2021, it's been a daunting task to conceptualize the idea of a journal that can help disseminate scientific and clinical practice related knowledge, experience and health related data generated in various healthcare settings on the Plateau, Nigeria and internationally. Despite several obstacles and challenges, the editorial board have worked tirelessly to ensure that this “baby” is properly nurtured to maturity and not suffer the adversities of prematurity and its complications.

From the first call for article submissions to the journal to this maiden edition, the editorial board received over 18 submissions and 6 made it through the editorial and peer review. These 6 articles are included in this maiden edition of the journal. Congratulations to the contributors and we hope to offer more quality and constructive editorial and peer reviews in subsequent issues of the journal. The focus of this editorial note is not to celebrate the success of birthing a new journal but to highlight a few challenges that contributors and reviewers

should work around to support and sustain the vision and mission of this journal of our noble professional association.

*Quality of submissions:* the visibility and impact of this journal will be guaranteed by the quality of original articles prepared and submitted in line with the journal's instructions. To keep to this goal, all authors should endeavor to carefully read the section on instructions to authors of the journal and adhere to these guidelines in preparation and formatting of all submissions for consideration in the journal. Compliance to these recommendations will not only ensure the quality of the articles submitted but will significantly shorten the editorial and peer review process.

*Quality of peer review:* one of the key-determining factors in sustaining high impact articles in a journal is the credibility and quality of peer review. Reviewers are entrusted with the responsibility to ensure the integrity of the scientific content of any manuscript placed in their hands for review. One of the frustrating experiences of the editorial job is having reviewers declining invitations to provide review for submissions following initial editorial assessment. Worst of all, is the non-response to the review invitation even after several reminders! This typically will delay the editorial process and frustrates the need for timely feedback to the authors for possible revisions or the unpleasant rejections. In any case, all articles submitted to a journal are required to go through the scientific rigor of peer review as ethically required for publication of any academic article. Therefore, reviewers should see an invitation for peer review

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as an honor and trust to safeguard the integrity of the scientific literature<sup>1</sup> and should not shy away from accepting such responsibilities. It is an academic and scholastic obligation, and indeed an honor that potential reviewers should be happy to accept rather than decline unless there are valid constraints or obvious conflicts of interest!

*Responses to reviewer's comments:* one of the unpleasant outcomes following submission of an article is outright rejection at the editorial assessment or following recommendations of peer reviewers. Often, the best-case scenario is to have an opportunity to provide revisions based on comments raised in the peer review process. Authors should consider this opportunity as “golden” and should work without delays to address the comments raised by reviewers or provide reasonable rebuttal to issues they genuinely do not agree with the reviewers. One thing that authors should always keep in mind is the fact that reviewers are often right in their comments and such comments should be carefully reflected upon and provide thoughtful responses in the cover letter after addressing such comments in the revised versions of the manuscripts. Authors desiring outright acceptances of their submitted manuscripts are not

willing to learn or enjoy the benefits of constructive peer review comments! It is also true to say that reviewers who passed a manuscript as “perfect” with no need for revisions have either not taking the responsibility of the peer review assignment with honor or are not just “helpful” reviewers!

Finally, this maiden edition demonstrates the multidisciplinary vision of the journal in publishing contributions from diverse disciplines in the health sciences. We have contributions that cut across Obstetrics, Ophthalmology, Otorhinolaryngology, to Paediatrics and developmental policy, and Health economics and financing. I hereby congratulate all the contributors, peer reviewers, and the editorial board for midwifing this new product to fruition. The ball is now in our court to sustain the momentum needed to move this journal to global visibility and impact!

#### **References**

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