

## EDITORIAL

### Malaysian Journal of Nutrition - Treading the Path Towards an International Journal

The Malaysian Journal of Nutrition (MJN) was founded in 1995 as the official publication of the Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM). Launching the MJN soon after hosting the 6<sup>th</sup> Asian Congress of Nutrition in 1991 were far-sighted initiatives of the NSM in its pioneering years, itself being established in 1985. The formation of MJN was aimed at disseminating scientific research and reviews in the broad field of nutrition.

In the formative years, MJN encountered challenges including getting sufficient appropriate articles, which invariably led to publishing delays. In part, this might have been due to the relatively small pool of nutritionists and related scientists in the country who were involved in research and publishing papers. The majority of the articles in the initial issues of MJN were from the Institute for Medical Research, and the two public universities that had begun to offer bachelor programs in nutrition in 1992: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Fortuitously, beginning from the mid-1990s, research in Malaysia was given a big boost when the government committed specific budgetary allocations for research and development as part of its policy to strengthen the scientific and technological infrastructure and capabilities of the country. The gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD) rose from 0.2% in 1992 to 0.7% in 2002, which amounted to RM1.6 billion under the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2004). Thus, coinciding with increasing public financial support for research, and with more universities offering nutrition and related programs at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, soon enough MJN was receiving progressively more submissions of original research articles.

Submissions from outside Malaysia became noticeable. In the past three years, international authorship approached 50% of the total contributions each year, as shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows MJN's international contributors came from 26 different countries up to 2015. Indeed, in the current issue (April, 2016), international authorship constitutes 70% of the total submissions, with first time contributors from China and Saudi Arabia.

The progression of MJN to becoming an international journal can be attributed to several quality-improving factors. First, the visibility of the journal has been significantly enhanced as MJN is increasingly being accepted for indexing by leading scientific databases on the World Wide Web. These include PubMed, Medline, Scopus, Google Scholar, CABI Global Health, as well as WHO Western Pacific Region Index Medicus (WPRIM) and ASEAN Citation Index (ACI). Being abstracted/indexed in these prominent journal search resources, allows MJN to reach out to a global readership.

A critically important requirement for journals to gain international recognition is having a rigorous review system in place. Since the beginning, MJN has adopted a double-blind peer-reviewing model. MJN's requirement for reviewers is clearly defined in its submission guidelines. For every article submitted, the MJN invites at least one external reviewer from outside the country of domicile of the corresponding author, in addition to two reviewers from the home country, but from outside the institutions of all

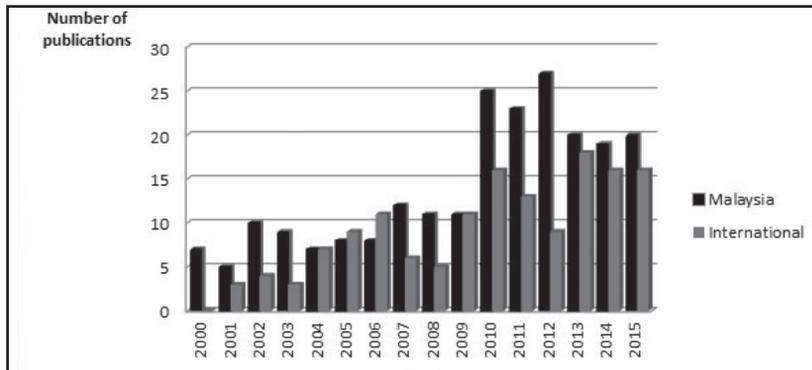
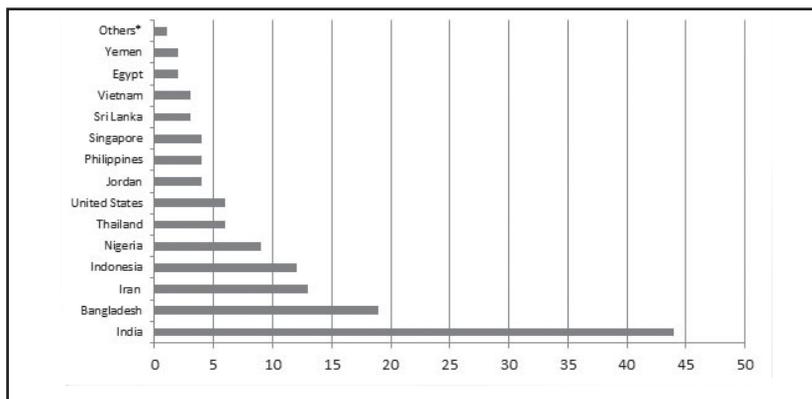


Figure 1. Distribution of articles published in MJN according to Malaysian and international authorship



\*Others: 12 countries with one publication each - Brazil, Cambodia, Germany, Korea, Kuwait, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Timor Leste, UAE

Figure 2. Distribution of international authors by country (2000-2015)

the authors, as far as practicable. Every attempt is made to have each article reviewed by 2 to 3 reviewers. In 2015, MJN published a total of 35 articles that were reviewed by 86 reviewers, out of whom 43% were from outside Malaysia. Appreciation is accorded to reviewers in the December issue each year.

Yet another step taken by MJN to enhance its international status is by including prominent nutritionists from outside Malaysia as members of the Editorial Board. Also from its inception, MJN has an Advisory Panel that comprises internationally eminent experts from nutrition and related fields. These members are invited to be reviewers and contributors of editorials and review papers.

A crucial publication standard is timeliness in compliance with the journal's declared publishing schedule. Beginning in 2010, MJN has extended its publishing frequency from 2 to 3 issues a year namely, April, August and December. Within a week or two after a new issue is published, its articles are uploaded on to the website of NSM/MJN ([www.nutriweb.org.my](http://www.nutriweb.org.my)). In this website, all MJN articles published since 1995 are available free of charge in pdf format. This makes it easy for readers to access and cite MJN articles.

In summary, while achievements of sorts have been attained by MJN in its journey from a national to an international journal, much work remains to be done. In striving to be a premier international journal, the Malaysian Journal of Nutrition will continue to be dedicated to the publication of original research that is grounded in scientific soundness, and adherence to ethical principles and professional standards.

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