

## FIGURE STORY

# Exploration and practice: My path as an editor

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My name is Yangang Ren, and I currently work at the International Cancer Institute of Peking University. I am the managing editor of the *Medical Review* (MR, ISSN: 2749-9642) and hold a medical doctorate from China Medical University and an educational doctorate from Tsinghua University. In addition to my academic roles, I serve as a member of the Asia-Pacific Committee of the International Society for Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE), a guiding committee member of the International Peer Review Week (PRW), and the Vice Chairman of the China Editology Society of Science Periodicals (CESSP). I also hold editorial positions in several Science Citation Index (SCI) journals, including *Endoscopic Ultrasound* (EUS) and *Journal of Translational Internal Medicine* (JTIM). Looking back at my career as a scientific journal editor, I would like to share some insights.

## GENUINE PASSION AND INNER DRIVE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS

In 2001, as a medical doctor and master's student in radiotherapy at the China Medical University, I had a chance encounter with academic editing work and quickly fell in love with it, making the decision to transition to a career in editing. I started at the *Chinese Journal of Practical Internal Medicine*, where I held various positions, including editor, associate senior editor, full senior editor, and managing editor. I had three important reasons for choosing an editing career. First, I found that journal is a very good platform for academic exchange through which I can communicate with many medical experts, understand the latest developments in the field, distill their experiences into articles through

topic planning and other work, and pass them on to frontline clinicians, thus benefiting patients. Second, I enjoyed learning together with readers, authors, editorial board members, and experts. During my 18 years of work for the *Chinese Journal of Practical Internal Medicine*, I established deep friendships with several generations of experts in the internal medicine. We have published many excellent articles and have witnessed many outstanding internal medicine experts rise step-by-step to become professors, head of department, academicians, and winners of the National Science and Technology Awards. Third, I learned that a good reputation is crucial for journal success. They say that the journal is like an open university, helping internal medicine doctors face the clinic by highlighting practicality, linking theory with practice, and improving diagnostics and treatment levels. The *Chinese Journal of Practical Internal Medicine* has won many honors, including the Chinese Publishing Government Award for Journal Nominations and the Chinese Quality Science and Technology Journal Award. The driving force behind my work in this field was internal. My love for this work and my understanding of journals have earned me important awards, such as the National Excellent Science and Technology Worker Award, the Third China Publishing Government Award for Outstanding Publishing Figures and Journal Nominations, the National News and Publishing Industry Leader Talent, and the Liaoning Top Ten Publishing Persons. The journal has also won important awards such as the Third China Publishing Government Award for Nominations.


I began working formally in English journals in 2010. My goal is to create better and more informative journals that would showcase the forefront of global medical research and serve international authors, readers, and disciplines better. Around 2011, I began exploring and practicing English language journals and gradually became involved in editing work for *EUS* and the *JTIM*. Both journals are now included in many international databases, *JTIM* ranks first in Asia and Journal Citation Reports (JCR) in the Q2 zone. We believe that the position of each technology journal differs. Chinese technology journals mainly serve domestic technology workers, whereas English technology journals serve

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researchers worldwide. This journal provides a platform for international scientific researchers to exchange information. In 2020, a new English-language journal was officially created at Peking University Health Science Center. The *MR* was launched at the end of 2021 and is a high-start capital periodic funded by the China Association for Science and Technology's "Excellent Journal" program. The editorial board is chaired by Academician Qimin Zhan, domestic experts are mainly from Peking University, while foreign experts are outstanding medical scientists in the United States and Europe. *MR* is a bimonthly journal that publishes approximately eight articles per month, with each issue led by an executive editor who sends invitations based on the latest developments in their respective fields. Domestic authors are Academician, Changjiang Scholars, and Distinguished Young Scholars, whereas foreign authors are primarily scholars from internationally renowned medical centers. Although *MR* has only been in operation for one year, it has successfully entered important medical databases, such as Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and Scopus, and has passed PubMed Central's evaluations. To summarize the exploration and practice of Chinese and English language journals, it is important to have a genuine desire to do well, face challenges and competition, and make choices without regret and have the ability to leave one's comfort zone.

## **A GOOD TEACHER AND FRIEND ENLIGHTEN, WHILE FRIENDS HELP EACH OTHER ALONG THE WAY**

In China, there is a common saying that "one hero needs three helpers". In the field of editing, I could not develop without assistance and guidance from many predecessors and peers in the editing industry. When I first entered the editing industry, my teachers were Zhiping Xia and Yunde Li, who opened the door for me and demonstrated how to be a good editor: An academic editor should not only "face the text" and repeatedly revise the manuscript but also enter the world of experts and laboratories, grasp the latest advances and academic frontiers, meet the needs of readers, work with the best authors, and journal need "content is the king". This philosophy continues to guide my research. Under their care, I have also received comprehensive training in editing, manuscript procedures, topic planning, and journal management. In just a few years, I went from being a young editor to becoming an Editor-in-Chief. When I joined the Youth Working Committee of the CESSP, I met more editing peers, and academic exchanges continued to increase. Encouraged and cared for by teachers such as Xitong Yao, the former Secretary-general of CESSP, Jialin Li from China Science Publishing & Media Group Ltd., and Suning You from the Chinese Medical Association, and with the

inspiration and support of my peers on the committee, my journal's quality, and personal career have continued to improve. With the continuous growth of science and technology in China, the number of English articles published by Chinese scientists is increasing, and their desire to present and exchange their research results with their international peers is growing. Before 2010, there were few English-language journals in China, although there were some successful cases, there was a lack of talent and experience in managing English journals. Therefore, running a high-impact English medical technology journal became a new issue of concern for me. However, there is no clear roadmap for reference. Although I have more than ten years of experience in managing Chinese medical and technology journals, I do not know where to start with English-language technology journals. Through continuous exchange, research, and learning from successful peers, ideas, and approaches to creating an English-language journal gradually became clearer to me. I found that an international editorial board, source of manuscripts, and management philosophy are indispensable. I am very grateful for the inspiration and training provided by teachers such as Hong Xiao from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) and Qian Liu from the Cancer Hospital Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences. Under the guidance of the chief editor, Professor Siyu Sun, and Professor Jian Kang, I participated in the establishment of the journals *EUS* and *JTIM* and gained some experience in exploring and practicing English-language journal management. In 2019, after careful consideration, I created a world-class journal on a higher academic platform. I resigned from my position at *Chinese Journal of Practical Internal Medicine* and, with the help and recommendation of friends, came to Beijing from Shenyang to embark on a second career at the age of 47, entering into the high-impact academic journal business and starting a new life in an unfamiliar city at the same time. I became the Editor-in-Chief of *Chronic Diseases and Translational Medicine* at the China International Medical Foundation and joined Peking University Health Science Center through talent introduction in August 2020, while starting work as an editor for the English-language journal *MR*. While personal effort is certainly important for spurring one's growth, good teachers and friends are even more crucial. I also encourage academic journal editors to actively seek reputable, academically strong, and willing mentors and friends.

## **BEING ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT WORKING FOR THE ACADEMIC ORGANIZATION AND KEEPING UP WITH THE FOREFRONT OF PUBLISHING**

Joining a reputable and inspiring academic organization is important for career planning and job competence. In

my professional career, a crucial experience was serving at the CESSP, an authoritative organization responsible for organizing domestic and international academic exchanges and carrying out project evaluation, standard approval, journal review, journal annual inspection, professional title evaluation, competition organization, and other related tasks. The CESSP also facilitates the establishment of partnerships between international academic organizations and encourages exchanges with peers both at home and abroad. This included twelve working committees, such as the Youth Working Committee. From 2006 to 2015, I served as the Deputy Director of the Youth Working Committee of the CESSP, and from 2015 to 2021, I served as the Director of the Youth Working Committee. In 2021, I became the Vice President of the Society, overseeing the work of the Youth Working Committee and the Committee of International Exchange and Cooperation. Youth editors are the fastest learners and most receptive group, encouraging me to focus on scientific journal development. Every year, I carefully plan the content of annual meetings and set up multiple forums to discuss the newest and most advanced topics. This conference has gradually become one of the most influential brand conferences in the world. In 2017, I organized the first Chinese Science and Technology Journal Youth Editor Competition on behalf of the China Association for Science and Technology and served as a judge for the "Junma Award", the most prestigious award for young science and technology journal editors. During this period, I developed academic, global, organizational, and coordination skills. The scientific journal publishing field is developing rapidly, and I have a responsibility and obligation to communicate and share my experiences with excellent peers worldwide. Since 2018, I have been attending the annual meetings of the ISMTE. After three years of on-site learning and application, I became a member of ISMTE and PRW. I regularly hold video conferences with peers worldwide and actively introduce the activities of the two societies to China. In 2021 and 2022, I successfully hosted PRW events in China, promoting our understanding of peer review-related issues in scientific journal editing. After working in society for several years, I believe that young editors have a high level of education, active thinking, and adaptability. However, they need to be more actively involved in international editing activities; expand their international perspectives on academic journal publishing; pay attention to the hotspots and forefront of editorial publishing-related issues such as open science, artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and the blockchain revolution; participate in work of the society; attend academic conferences; and grow and learn together with their peers. This will enable them to handle difficulties and pain points in their work, adapt to the requirements of new paradigms for job competence, obtain good job promotions and welfare benefits, and

achieve career success and satisfaction.

## **DEVOTE MYSELF TO STUDYING EDITORIAL DISCIPLINE AND RESEARCH WORK**

I have trained young editors, explored journal profit models, and increased international influence. I have achieved results, accumulated experience, shared lessons from the experience, and written multiple articles published in high-quality editorial journals such as *Acta Editologica* and *Chinese Journal of Scientific and Technical Periodicals*. Since 2005, I have published 13 papers on editorial studies as the first author and guided or participated in the publication of 42 editorial papers (Supplemental material). Among them, my paper *Discussing on a new way of cultivation of young editors* published in the *Acta Editologica* in 2010, summarized the experience of the growth and training of young editors in the editorial department of *Chinese Practical Internal Medicine*. This has attracted attention and recognition in industry. Currently, the paper has been cited 40 times and downloaded and read 581 times.<sup>[1]</sup> Based on writing multiple articles, I have also actively participated in editorial research projects, hosting and participating in several editorial studies (Table 1). These editing studies deepened my understanding of journal publishing, editorial work, and interdisciplinary research. Through research, practice, and summaries, I grasped trends and laws in the development of journals, identified problems and proposed targeted solutions. In addition, by identifying research directions and combining them with my experience and interests, I have been able to conduct in-depth research to improve my personal research abilities. I actively participated in industry conferences to exchange experiences, broaden my horizons, and expand my thinking. Editing studies improve the efficiency of journal work and contribute to the development of the field of editing.

## **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE, WE WILL BE SYNCHRONIZED WITH THE WORLD'S ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATE WITH THE WORLD'S ACADEMIC JOURNALS FOR MUTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

Through my experience with English journals from *EUS* and *JTIM*, I gradually gained a clearer understanding of scientific journals in English and developed my insights. Although an increasing number of English scientific journals launched by China are joining the ranks of leading international journals, they remain far from adequate in terms of quantity and overall strength. Several important issues must be addressed in the development of English science and technology journals in China.



**Table 1: Editorial research projects hosted and participated by Yangang Ren**

Year	Project or publication	Funding agency	Host or participate
2006	The mutual promoting relationship between China practical series journals and clinical research work in Liaoning Province	The Education Department of Liaoning Province	Host
2007	The marketing project of technical journal	The Society of China University Journal	Host
2008	How to highlight the dual-effect of scientific research and technology information dissemination	The China Association for Science and Technology (Young Scientists Forum)	Host
2010	Application of Scientometrics in basic research, clinical diagnosis and treatment of chronic noncommunicable diseases	The Shenyang Bureau of Science and Technology	Host
	Research on the three-dimensional publishing model of scientific journals	The China Association for Science and Technology (Young Scientists Forum)	Host
2011	The essential attributes and functional orientation of scientific journals	The China Association for Science and Technology (Young Scientists Forum)	Host
2012	Scientific information dissemination and academic misconduct	The China Association for Science and Technology (Young Scientists Forum)	Host
2016	Analysis of the current situation of academic misconduct in medical papers in China	The Education Department of Liaoning Province	Host
2020	<i>Medical Review</i>	The China Science and Technology Periodical Excellence Action Plan	Participate
2021	Report on the development of China's science and technology periodical industry	The China Association for Science and Technology	Participate
2022	Survey on domestic and foreign academic publishing and dissemination platforms and tools	The China Association for Science and Technology	Host
	"Four orientations" strategy for improving the quality of scientific journal content strategy and path	The China Association for Science and Technology	Host
	International reputation survey of Chinese science and technology journals	The China Association for Science and Technology	Participate

First, The Chinese government encourages scientists to focus on four orientations: the global frontiers of science and technology, national economic development, the major needs of the country, and the health and safety of the people. Content quality control runs through various stages, such as topic selection, soliciting manuscripts, reviewing, editing, publishing, and dissemination services. Scientific editors are responsible for overseeing the entire process and are leaders in content quality control. Authors are direct contributors to the content of a journal, and their academic level and writing ability constitute the basic aspects of enhancing content quality. Reviewers evaluate the academic innovation and practical value of each paper, serving as "pre-filters" in content quality control. The editorial board makes comprehensive judgments on the academic standards of the entire issue and comprehensively assesses the overall content quality. Readers provide feedback on the value of each paper in various visible or invisible ways, such as subscribing to the journal, visiting/downloading from the website or database, and reading/liking/sharing on WeChat. They indirectly affecting the planning of topics and the setup of columns of the journal and playing a positive role in promoting content quality improvement. Readers, authors, and reviewers of scientific journals can mutually transform and belong to the scientific community, standing in fundamental positions in the construction of the content quality of the journal. The advent of the new media era has broken the unidirectional nature of academic communication. Readers are

not only document readers but also content producers, and their importance in improving content quality has further increased. In summary, editors, authors, reviewers, editorial board, and readers constitute five dynamic elements, forming a "five-wheel drive", jointly promoting the improvement of content quality of science and technological journals.<sup>[2]</sup>

Second, against the background of global open science, Chinese science and technology journals must adapt to new publishing paradigms to achieve rapid development. Globally, an increasing number of researchers are publishing papers in open-access (OA) journals, which has become a trend in the research community. According to statistics, 63% of researchers worldwide have chosen to publish articles in the form of OA and approximately 73.2% of academic journals in China have begun to adopt OA publishing.<sup>[3]</sup> The Chinese publishing has gradually shifted towards OA to enhance the quality and international influence of journals. Under the wave of new technologies, journals will undergo disruptive changes and will need to provide more services and value, such as data management and online communication platforms. At the same time, journals also face increased risks such as data protection and copyright maintenance, which need to be given more attention. Additionally, digital technology is changing the form of publishing. Digital publishing is more open, efficient, and transparent than traditional publishing methods. For example, AI technologies such as

ChatGPT can quickly screen and edit articles, greatly improving the efficiency of publishing.<sup>[4]</sup>

Third, only when scientific editors deeply integrated with the journal's discipline or industry, or becoming researchers, can they have the confidence to conduct the content operation of the journal. They can accurately understand and meet the real and potential needs of readers through the dual identities of editor and researcher, with a global perspective and internal view. Based on the networked publishing platform and digitized reading terminal, "readers" are expanding to "users". Science and technology journals should attach importance to user experience and academic application scenarios. Editorial scholarship guarantees that the journal will grasp the frontiers of research and maintaining its academic vitality. Regardless of how technology progresses and media changes, improving content quality should be the conscious pursuit of all journal managers. In this era of accelerating media convergence, let us experience the confusion caused by the subversion of communication patterns, witness the harmonious coexistence of communication channels and content quality in transformation and upgrading, and ultimately usher in the integration and development of science and technology journals.<sup>[5]</sup>

Forth, there is still a shortage in both quantity and quality of technical talents as well as managerial composite talents in the publishing industry. This caused management problems for many journals during their development process, such as how to improve the management level of the entire process of scientific journals, and how to better communicate with international publishers to promote the quality of magazines. Efforts are needed to cultivate managerial publishing talent, including establishing a complete talent training system that includes curriculum design, teaching resources, *etc.* Furthermore, efforts should be made to promote university-enterprise cooperation to ensure that students acquire professional knowledge and practical ability, and to train high-end composite publishing talent through learning, business training, and overseas exchange programs. Additionally, it is essential to enhance the benefit and promotion systems, make editor a respectable and honorable profession, and create an industry environment conducive to the growth of editing talents. Finally, professional training and lifelong education should be strengthened, and high-level

international academic and managerial talents should be recruited to join the science and technology editing team.<sup>[6]</sup>

Finally, exploration and practice are stages and methods that academic editors must experience to enhance their competencies. Theory-practice-research-application is our best practice for self-improvement as an academic editor. The global science and technology journals are in a phase of rapid development, and we are honored to be one of them. I also feel a great sense of responsibility to continuously exchange and learn with peers worldwide and pass on my experience to the new generation of young academic editors, enhancing the social influence of academic editors.

## DECLARATION

### Supplementary material

Supplementary material mentioned in this article is online available at the journal's official site only.

### Author contributions

Ren YG: Conceptualization, Writing—Original draft, Writing—Review and Editing.

### Conflict of interest

Yangang Ren is the Associate Editor-in-Chief of the journal. The article was subject to the journal's standard procedures, with peer review handled independently of the editor and the affiliated research groups.

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