

Editorial

**JCCPSL: Three decades of growth and the road to global visibility****Carukshi Arambepola* & Shamini Prathapan**

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Abstract

Established in the late 1920s, the first professional association in the field of public health was the *Society of Medical Officers of Health, Ceylon*. Its official publication, *Transactions of the Society of Medical Officers of Health, Ceylon*, first appeared in 1932, laying the foundation for scholarly communication in public health in Sri Lanka.

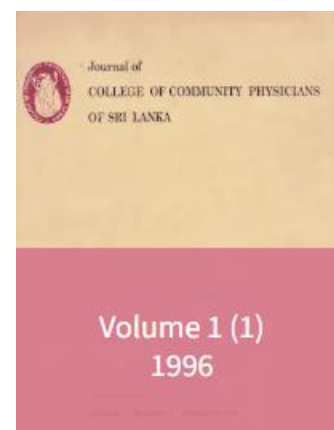
Building on this publishing tradition, the *Journal of the College of Community Physicians of Sri Lanka (JCCPSL)* was launched in 1995.

Launch of the JCCPSL was particularly significant as it coincided with the inauguration of the College of Community Physicians of Sri Lanka (CCPSL), marking a new era for the discipline of Community Medicine in the country. The journal became the official scientific voice of the CCPSL, providing a platform for disseminating research, sharing professional experiences and advancing public health knowledge in Sri Lanka.

The first issue of JCCPSL carried a leading article titled "*Progress in Public Health: The Past Quarter*

Century" by Dr H.M.S.S.D. Herath. The article highlighted the substantial contribution of specialists in Community Medicine to improving the health of the Sri Lankan population while responding to an evolving public health landscape.

In many ways, it set the tone for what the journal would strive to achieve over the years.



During its early years, the journal flourished under the leadership of successive editors, despite operating with limited resources. Until 2001, it published one issue annually, including a special Millennium Supplement dedicated to the success of public health services in Sri Lanka. Subsequently, publication increased to 2-3 issues each year, one of which was a supplementary issue containing the abstracts presented at the CCPSL Annual Academic Sessions.

These achievements were particularly noteworthy because, for many years, the editorial work was undertaken almost entirely by the Editor and Co-editors, without the support of a formal Editorial Board. Managing manuscript processing, peer review, editing and publication with such limited human resources, made the regular publication of the journal an enormous undertaking.

A major turning point came in 2017. Under the leadership of the then President of the CCPSL, Professor Chrishantha Abeysena, a strategic decision was made to transform the journal into one that could meet international publishing standards. A dedicated Editorial Board comprising university academics and Ministry of Health consultants representing diverse areas of expertise was established, together with a language editor from outside the College. We were privileged to join this initiative as Co-editors, sharing a common vision.

Since then, the journal has undergone substantial transformation.

A major milestone has been the expansion of publication to four regular issues annually, in addition to a special issue dedicated to the abstracts of the CCPSL Annual Academic Sessions. Equally important has been the strengthening of the journal's editorial processes. The adoption of structured peer review, stronger research integrity policies, adherence to international reporting guidelines and the implementation of electronic manuscript management have significantly strengthened the

quality of the publication process. Editorial decisions are now made collectively through a rigorous double-blind peer-review process, ensuring transparency, impartiality and scientific quality. Monthly Editorial Board meetings have facilitated timely decision-making, improved manuscript turnaround times and consistency in editorial practice. The dedication of successive Editorial Board members has been instrumental in maintaining scientific standards despite operating with limited resources.

The scope of the journal has also expanded considerably. In addition to original research articles, several new article categories such as cover stories, original review articles, health systems and policy articles, brief reports and continuing medical education articles have been introduced. The journal itself has undergone a visual transformation with redesigned covers and featured cover stories, giving it a contemporary identity. Since 2016, each issue has been centred on a pre-selected public health theme, often aligned with national or international public health observances, thereby enhancing the relevance and coherence of its content.

Today, JCCPSL serves as an important platform for researchers, academics, clinicians, postgraduate trainees and public health practitioners broadening its multidisciplinary appeal. Further, while early issues predominantly featured descriptive epidemiology, communicable diseases, maternal and child health, and health services research, more recent volumes have embraced non-communicable diseases, environmental health, nutrition, health systems, health economics, implementation research, digital health, global health, mental health, disaster preparedness and other emerging public health priorities. Among the journal's notable achievements has been the publication of two special thematic issues; one on COVID-19 in 2020 and another on cancers in Sri Lanka in 2022, demonstrating its responsiveness to emerging national public health priorities.



Recognising the challenges faced by many journals from the Global South in achieving international visibility, the JCCPSL aligned its publishing practices with the Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS) framework. This involved introducing comprehensive editorial policies, formal peer-review guidelines, publication ethics, archiving policies, and Creative Commons licensing to improve compliance with international publishing standards. These efforts resulted in the journal progressing from one-star to a two-star JPPS rating within a relatively short period. Further milestones include registration with the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) recommendations and indexing in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) by strengthening its online presence through the Sri Lanka Journals Online (SLJOL) platform. Collectively, these developments have substantially enhanced the journal's wider accessibility and readership beyond national boundaries.

Beyond publication, the JCCPSL has become an important vehicle for professional development. Members of the Editorial Board conduct several scientific writing workshops annually for postgraduate trainees in converting their research work into publishable manuscripts.

Despite these achievements, one important milestone remains. i.e. the successful indexing of JCCPSL in major international bibliographic databases. Such

indexing is far more than a mark of prestige; it would enhance discoverability, increase citation potential and facilitate the dissemination of locally generated evidence to the wider scientific community. For journal publishing research from a lower-middle-income country, indexing also ensures that important public health experiences and innovations become part of the international evidence base.

The pathway towards indexing is, however, demanding. Major indexing agencies assess not only the publication quality, regularity and ethics, but also its digital preservation, citation performance, international diversity of authorship and overall scientific impact. The journey towards international indexing should therefore be a collective endeavour involving editors, reviewers, authors, readers and the College itself. Every carefully conducted study, thoughtful peer review, timely editorial decision, and high-quality publication contributes to strengthening the journal's reputation and scientific influence.

As the JCCPSL approaches its fourth decade, it continues to remain true to its original mission, i.e. to advance knowledge in public health while serving as a trusted platform for evidence that informs policy, practice and education. With the collective support of the public health community, we are confident that the JCCPSL is well positioned to achieve greater international recognition in the years ahead.