

Editorial

The mission to launch the Kenya Eye Health Journal (KEHJ): rationale, goals and features

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The most challenging term of reference for the Scientific and Education Committee of the Ophthalmological Society of Kenya (OSK) has been to launch a peer-reviewed journal. From the word go the Committee was cognizant of the monumental task ahead but took up the challenge with courage and determination. As the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu once said, "the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". We thank God that our journey has been successful, culminating in the launch of KEHJ at the annual OSK Congress in November 2024. This inaugural editorial provides an overview of this journey.

The Kenya Eye Health Journal (KEHJ) is an open access journal published by the OSK, with the aim of advancing research by all eye care practitioners and teams in Kenya. This inaugural edition of KEHJ was preceded by a baseline situation analysis to assess the need and feasibility of starting a scientific journal with OSK as the publisher. The analysis included consultations with OSK leadership, researchers, leaders in academia, experts in editorial and review processes and OSK members. Oral consultations were supplemented with sensitization via email and WhatsApp communications to eye health actors in Kenya. The main finding of the situation analysis was that there is both the need and the resources to publish the journal.

Kenya has well established eye health services with both public and private sectors and supportive non-governmental organizations. Moreover, the country is endowed with a highly qualified eye health workforce which is organized into eye health teams. The teams serve as the basic service delivery units with different teams having varying combinations of cadres of workers and complementary skill mix. The common cadres of skilled eye health workers in Kenya are ophthalmologists, Ophthalmic clinical Officers, Ophthalmic clinical cataract surgeons, Optometrists, Ophthalmic nurses, low vision specialists,

technicians, community eye health workers and eye health managers. The need to maintain and promote interactions, synergy and complementary function among the different players in the eye team was the overriding rationale for OSK to focus KEHJ as an "eye health journal", as opposed to a "journal of ophthalmology". This ethos also informs the scope and publication criteria of the journal as well as the membership to the editorial board.

The availability of adequate and constant supply of quality manuscripts will always be critical. Kenya has vibrant eye health services with ongoing research projects and innovative approaches by individuals, community eye health providers, eye care facilities, training and research institutions, and organizations. Moreover, there are workshops and conferences by OSK and other eye health professional groups, where oral presentations are made. On the contrary, most of the research activities, reports, innovations, and best practices from Kenya remain unpublished. Reports from these activities continue to accumulate in "dark archives" with no national or international visibility and this is the gap KEHJ targets to bridge. KEHJ will provide an outlet for dissemination of the Kenyan research findings, innovations and reports, while also being open to papers from the international scene.

KEHJ will publish articles from all eye health disciplines including basic sciences, clinical, public health, social sciences, and economic research among others. In addition, KEHJ will publish invited review articles and case reports on contemporary topics, innovations, and best practices. The manuscripts shall undergo thorough editorial and peer review before they are published.

Sustainability of KEHJ has been taken into consideration. Support by OSK and partners is crucial for KEHJ sustainability. OSK has provided administrative support,

website, publication services of promotional materials, and mobilized its members to support KEHJ. Furthermore, OSK has cordial working relationships with the Government of Kenya, training and research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. These partners received briefing about KEHJ during National Eye Health Working Group meetings where OSK has representation. The Group members welcomed the idea of creating a Kenyan eye health journal and promised their support. With time KEHJ will develop revenue generating strategies such as charging for advertisements and offprints.

OSK applied for an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) for KEHJ and appointed an Editorial Board. The Board members have experience in research, scientific writing, editorial and peer review processes, and are broadly representative of the eye care sector. Their terms of reference include to: direct KEJ strategic goal and mission, provide scientific expertise, manage editorial and peer review processes, assist authors and reviewers who are facing challenges and spearhead promotion of KEHJ to improve international visibility. With time OSK will recruit external advisors for KEHJ.

The Editorial Board prepared the standard operating procedures for production of KEJ, and authors submission guidelines which are available at <https://osk.or.ke/journals-2/>. The cover page of KEHJ has adopted the colours of the national flag. KEHJ shall be published online at least twice a year. Print journal will be published when resources are available. The current issue covers a broad range of topics, including outcomes of cataract surgery and trabeculectomy, keratoconus, research mentorship, response of eye care to harsh economic times and the trajectory of eye care in Kenya. We also include a tribute to

an extraordinary man whom we have sadly lost a few weeks to the launch of KEHJ, Dr Amos Kibata. As the President of OSK, he fully supported the preparation for the launch of the journal.

We look forward to a long and successful partnership with you as a reader and author. By working together, it will be possible to take the journal to great heights. We are eager to have your comments, feedback and suggestions. Communications and manuscripts to KEHJ should be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief using the email kehj@osk.or.ke. The Board will undertake to prepare a KEHJ strategic plan and embark on training of reviewers and editors. Some of these pending activities together with production of the print journal have financial implications. We appeal for support from partners and any pledges for financial support to KEHJ should be directed to OSK using the email eyesocietykenya@gmail.com.

The Editorial Board takes this opportunity to thank the OSK Governing Council under the Chairmanship of Dr. Amos Githeko for visionary leadership and providing the resources needed to kick-start the journal. Special recognition goes to members of Scientific and Education Committee Dr. Zahra Rashid, Dr. Lucy Manyara, Dr. Antonella Wanjiku, Dr. Beatrice Moraa and Dr. Shafiq Jafferji for their technical support during the formative stages of KEHJ. We also thank all persons who contributed to the discussions around the situation analysis and feasibility assessment for the journal. We are very grateful to the Government of Kenya and eye health partners for providing a supportive environment for KEHJ to thrive. Special thanks to the Fred Hollows Foundation and Operation Eyesight Universal for supporting the production of this journal.

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