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Letter to the Editor

A New Voice for Neurology in the Middle East and Africa

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Neurological disorders have become one of the leading causes of death and disability in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), particularly in the Middle East and Africa (MEA), a region that collectively accounts for nearly 25% of the global population[1,2]. In 2019, neurological disorders were the second leading cause of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) and all-cause mortality in the Middle East, surpassed only by cardiovascular diseases[3]. In Africa, cerebrovascular disorders, epilepsy, and dementia are estimated to be the leading contributors to neurological disability and mortality, although robust epidemiological data is lacking[4]. The increasing burden of neurological diseases in the MEA region could be attributable to increasing life expectancy and the epidemiological disease transition for infectious to non-infectious diseases. This growing burden indicates that neurological ailments will remain a major public health priority in the MEA regions, attracting attention from researchers, policy makers, healthcare professionals and non-governmental organizations.

This calls for neurological research aimed at addressing research topical areas that are of interest to the region. Over the past decade, interest in neurological research has grown substantially in LMICs, particularly across the MEA region. This growing interest has stimulated initiatives to advance research, improve the diagnosis and management of neurological disorders, and strengthen advocacy for neurological care. However, organized and sustainable research programs and collaborative efforts remain limited across the MEA region. This is attributable to a range of challenges, including inadequate and unsustainable funding, political instability, armed conflicts, and prolonged humanitarian crises, all of which continue to impede the development of robust neurological research and healthcare infrastructure.

One of the major challenges faced by academic researchers in the MEA is the lack of unified, high-quality platforms or journals dedicated to publishing and disseminating contemporary, clinically relevant neurology research. This limits the visibility, accessibility, and regional impact of locally generated evidence. Furthermore, as an increasing number of academic journals adopt open access publishing models, the financial burden of publication is frequently imposed on authors[5]. In LMICs, where public funding mechanisms for research remain limited, article processing charges (APCs) often represent a substantial barrier to publication. Although some journals offer fee waivers or discounts for authors from LMICs, APCs at many open-access journals commonly amount to several thousand US dollars per article. Because many commercial publishers rely on APCs as a primary component of their publishing model, these costs remain well beyond the financial reach of many researchers in the region.

In response to the growing burden of neurological disorders and the financial barriers faced by researchers and authors from the (MEA) and other LMICs, a physician-led initiative was established by a group of neurologists with roots in these regions. Their shared vision was to create an affordable, high-quality, open-access journal dedicated to advancing research on neurological disorders in LMICs, with a particular focus on the MEA region.

To reflect and strengthen the collaborative partnership between the Middle East and Africa, the journal was named the *Middle East & Africa Journal of Neurology (MAJN)*. We are pleased to announce the official launch of MAJN, which aims to address the unmet need for a high-quality neurology journal serving the MEA region and other LMICs. MAJN is committed to providing an affordable open-access publishing platform that prioritizes the advancement of neurological research, education, and patient care over profit-driven publishing models. By reducing financial barriers to publication while maintaining rigorous scientific and ethical standards, MAJN seeks to amplify the voices of researchers from all underrepresented regions and foster equitable global collaboration in neurological sciences.

We invite clinicians, researchers, educators, and policymakers from the MEA region and beyond to contribute to this shared vision. Together, through scientific excellence, regional collaboration, and equitable access to knowledge, MAJN aspires to become the leading platform for neurological research in the Middle East and Africa while serving the broader community of LMICs worldwide.

Declaration of interest

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Artificial intelligence

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