



# Sixty Years of History of Yonsei Medical Journal

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Yonsei Medical Journal (YMJ), the first English medical journal in Korea, was published 60 years ago (in 1960). At the beginning, only one volume was published a year. However, it is an international academic journal now that publishes 12 volumes a year. It has made rapid progress in its quantity and quality. According to the history of publication of medical journals in Korea, main publications were from academic societies and universities. At the end of the 1950s, academic journals began to be published in each departmental society and medical school. However, internationalization of medical research has progressed since the 1990s. Foreign journals have been preferred by authors to present research results. It has become difficult to maintain domestic medical journals, especially journals published by universities other than academic societies. As a result, most medical journals published in domestic universities have stopped publishing. Under such difficult circumstances, it is remarkable in the history of Korean medical journals that Yonsei Medical Journal has not only continued its vitality as an academic journal, but also developed and established its status as an international academic journal.

It is surprising that the university published the first English medical journal in Korea in 1960 when scars of the Korean War still remained. At that time, only a few academic societies were publishing medical journals. However, this did not happen by accident. There was a history of publishing an English medical journal—The Journal of Severance Union Medical College—in 1933, at the Severance College of Medicine, the predecessor of Yonsei University College of Medicine. The editor-

in-chief of the journal was Myung Hak Choi, a professor of anatomy. Although the editorial committee had some foreign missionaries, it was published mainly by Korean professors. Although several German papers were published, most were English papers. Unfortunately, the journal stopped publishing in 1937 when the Sino-Japanese War began. This history made it possible to publish a new English medical journal in 1960 (about 30 years later).

Direct triggers or specific preparation processes for the establishment of Yonsei Medical Journal remain unclear. It could be presumed that it was founded together in the atmosphere of publishing academic journals of each academic society and medical school which began in the late 1950s. However, unlike other academic journals, it would have been difficult to decide on the publication of English medical journals unprecedented in Korea. Through the preface of the first issue, the background of the establishment of the English academic journal could be guessed. The preface revealed that papers in the journal were results of research funded by some organizations such as China Medical Board, U.S. Public Health Service, and National Science Foundation in the United States.<sup>1</sup> At that time, the medical community received various support from overseas during the post-war recovery process after the Korean War. It could be presumed that the need for a method to present research results that received support was one of motivations for the establishment of YMJ.

In addition, the first issue contained a congratulatory message by Dr. J. A. Curran who served as an advisor in China Medical Board and Yonsei University College of Medicine.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Curran evaluated the publication of YMJ in a consultation paper published in 1962 as follows: “It is revealing of the extent to which college faculty have kept abreast of the advance of scientific medicine and published results of their original work in excellent for the benefit of medical scientists everywhere. This achievement under many handicaps is worth of high praise.”<sup>3</sup>

At the time of the first publication, the editor-in-chief of YMJ was Professor Lee Woo-Choo in his early 40s who received a PhD in Pharmacology from Wisconsin University in the USA. The Editorial Board had young and motivated professors with

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age of about 40 years, including Lew Joon, Choi Kum-Duk, Kenneth Scott, Hong Pil-Hoon, Lim Eui-Sun, and Hong Seok-Ki. In addition, senior professors having major positions, including Professors Kim Myung-Sun, Cho Dong-Soo, and Lee Pyung-Hee, were in charge of editorial consulting. The journal was published once a year in December until 1967. Qualifications for submission were limited to researchers who were working or worked at Yonsei University and related institutions and graduates, clearly revealing the character of the academic journal of college.

In early days, YMJ played a unique role in addition to the general role of journals in publishing research papers. It appears well in the "Abstract". This is not a collection of thesis abstracts published in YMJ, but abstracts of research papers published in other journals by a faculty member of Yonsei University at the time. Through this, topics and achievements studied by school researchers during the year can be seen at a glance. Of course, it was a difficult project to think nowadays when hundreds of in-school researchers actively would publish their research results. However, it was a possible and meaningful attempt in the situation when the number of professors was not large with few academic journals.

From the beginning, YMJ published high-quality original articles. What is noteworthy is that it not only publishes theses, but also Review Articles. These review articles have been published since the beginning. Representative review articles include 'Hansen's Disease in Korea' by Prof. Lew Joon in the first issue,<sup>4</sup> 'Korea's Pulmonary Tuberculosis' by Professor Hong Pil-Hoon in issue 2 published in the following year,<sup>5</sup> and 'Review of paragonimiasis in Korea' published in 1962.<sup>6</sup> In addition, these papers have historical values as they provide important data about Korean disease history, although 60 years have passed. Another interesting article published earlier was "The History of Ancient Korean Medicine" by N. H. Bowman who worked in the Ophthalmology/ENT Department of Severance Hospital from 1913 to 1916. The author published this paper in 1914 as a missionary of the American Southern Methodist Episcopal Society. This paper, which systematically organized the history of Korean traditional medicine, was originally published in Transactions of the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Since this journal can only be seen in special institutions, Kim Chong Hwae, a librarian at the Yonsei University Medical Library at the time, found this paper and repub-

lished it in YMJ to spread its historical value.<sup>8</sup>

As such, YMJ published a number of articles of historical value in the early 1960s. YMJ also made remarkable development academically as an international journal. First, this journal joined NIH's National Library of Medicine in 1961, the year after its beginning. It was the first Korean academic journal to be listed in Index Medicus in 1962. It was then listed in SCI-Expanded in 1998 and finally in SCI in 2014. As mentioned earlier, it published one volume at the end of the year for the first few years. It then published two volumes a year from 1968 to 1985. The year 1985 was the 100th anniversary of the founding of Yonsei University which started in Jejungwon. To commemorate the anniversary, this journal attempted to publish four volumes a year. It actually published four volumes a year from 1986 to 1994. From 1995 to 2018, it published six volumes a year (once every two months). Since May 2018, it has been publishing 12 volumes a year (every month). YMJ expressed the meaning of the publication of the first issue. It hopes for the future in its preface as follows: "It is sincerely hoped that this collection of clinical and investigative reports will be only the first of many to appear from Yonsei University during the succeeding years." This little wish, like a single mustard seed, grew 60 years later into a large tree that yielded unexpected good results.

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