

**EDITORIAL****ROLE OF IMPACT FACTOR IN ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY OF A MEDICAL JOURNAL****Dr. Gopendra Prasad Deo**Associate Professor, Department of Anaesthesiology & Critical Care  
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The impact factor (IF) is often used for assessing quality, importance, and influence of medical journals to their respective disciplines. It is the frequency with which articles from a journal published in the past two years have been cited in a particular year and is calculated each year by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI).<sup>1</sup> The Journal Citation Reports (JCR) can provide Impact Factors and Times Cited for journals for more than 8400 of the world's most cited, peer reviewed journals in approximately 200 disciplines. High impact factor or highly cited journals are considered more prestigious and important. IFs are also used as a performance index of their journal and a means of ranking their journals.<sup>2,3</sup> Academic institutions assess the quality of publications of applicants by IFs for promotion and hiring new recruits.

There are quite a few controversies associated with IFs. Only those journals indexed by Journal Citation Reports (JCR) have IFs. English language journals predominate. Apart from North American, British and Dutch titles, journals from other countries are not well represented. Journals that publish longer articles, survey or review articles are often with more citations, tend to have higher IFs. Similarly, journals with editorials, correspondence, reports of meetings, can often have much higher IFs. Comparing IFs of journals in different subject areas may be valueless. For example, according to Journal Citation Reports, the medical journal with the highest IF for 2010 is *New Journal of Medicine* (IF 53.486). However, the journal with the highest IF for journals in veterinary studies, *Veterinary Research*, only has an IF of 3.765.<sup>1</sup> Clearly it can be meaningless to compare the IFs for journals in different fields rather can only be used to compare journals within the same discipline.

Thus, journal's IF can be increased by reducing the number of original research papers and increasing the number of editorials (are not counted in the denominator of IF), review papers (has more citations as original articles) and by encouraging self-citations.<sup>4</sup> It is well known that original research papers are the most important for generating new knowledge. By decreasing their number of publications to increase IF, they are mitigating dissemination of scientific knowledge and curtailing scientific discourse and thus reducing the overall influence of these journals on the scientific community.

**REFERENCES**

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