

RESEARCH PUBLICATION IN AN INDEXED JOURNAL/ NATIONAL JOURNAL/INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATION

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Recently there has been a lot of discussion amongst the academic medical fraternity as to what constitutes a Research Publication in Indexed Journal/ National Journal/International Publication etc. This is more after Medical council of India making it compulsory for service and promotions. More and more journals have come up after this decision and are daily coming up with indexing in one or other indexing service. This brings out the relevant question as to what is a quality research and what are just a study but not research.

Indexation of a journal may be considered a reflection of its quality. Indexed journals can be considered to be of a higher scientific quality as compared to non-indexed journals. However indexation of medical journals has become a debatable issue. For a long-time since 1879 Index Medicus had been a comprehensive index of medical scientific journal articles till 2003 when its role was taken up primarily by the online database-Pubmed. Over the years, many other popular indexation services have developed. These include MedLine, PubMed Central, EMBASE, SCOPUS, EBSCO Publishing's Electronic Databases, SCIRUS among others and are used as Indexing services by different journals.

Another controversial issue is that of impact factor (IF).¹ IF is used as a proxy for the relative importance of a journal within its field. IF is awarded to the journals indexed in Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Reports. IF has been

criticised for manipulation and incorrect application.² There are multiple factors that could bias the calculation of the IF.³ These include coverage and language preference of the database, procedures used to collect citations, algorithm used to calculate the IF, citation distribution of journals, online availability of publications, negative citations, preference of journal publishers for articles of a certain type, publication lag, citing behaviour across subjects, and possibility of exertion of influence from journal editors.⁴ Interestingly, IF is not available for all indexed journals. In fact, not all journals indexed even in Index Medicus/MedLine/PubMed are indexed in the Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Reports. Similarly, not all journals indexed in Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Reports and consequently have an IF are listed in Index Medicus/PubMed/MedLine.⁵

This brings us to the question which indexation is best and most valid? How to compare the quality of articles published in journals indexed with different indexation services? These questions are of particular relevance for the following reasons. First, importance of publications is being increasingly recognised by the academic institutions. MCI guidelines also recommend indexed publications for teaching faculty in medical colleges. Consequently many more authors would be publishing than ever before.⁴ Selection of high quality journal becomes a difficult decision for the

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authors as there is no clarity on the issue. Should one aim at only the journals indexed in Index Medicus/MedLine/PubMed? Is it appropriate to make submissions to journals having a high impact factor although they are not indexed with Index Medicus/MedLine/PubMed?

Second, recently many more indexation services have come up. These include Caspur, DOAJ, Expanded Academic ASAP, Genamics Journal Seek, Hinari, Index Copernicus, Open J Gate, Primo Central, Pro Quest, SCOLAR, SIIC databases, Summon by Serial Solutions, Science citation Index, Ulrich's International Periodical Directory. Are these indexations services equally relevant? Would a journal indexed with any of these databases be considered "indexed"?

The third criteria as to what constitutes an International publication is also not that important. Many Orthopaedic journals published from outside India are neither indexed nor peer reviewed. A publication in these journals can not be given a credit similar to an Indexed and peer reviewed journal.

The fourth criteria as to what constitutes a research publication is also important. The federal policy is to protect human subjects from investigations that contribute to generalized knowledge about a disease or condition. This requires an Institutional review board clearance. Certain publications as a review article, case

report, letter to editor etc. are actually meant to share information of a medical or educational subject and do not need an IRB approval and so although published but are not considered a research publication. However a case report (one, two or three cases) needing IRB approval for the investigation, procedure or management may be considered a research publication.

These are some questions that warrant discussion. Associations of editors of medical journals such as International Committee of Medical Journal Editors could play a pivotal role in such discussion.⁵ Currently if not PubMed then a peer reviewed, open access journal with online manuscript submission and revision system and with transparency at all steps may be considered an ideal journal.

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