

The Journal and Academia

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It is not so long ago—not longer than a century ago—that physicians started to apply a scientific method to the study of patients. Therefore, most of what we know—and make decisions on—is based on clinical observations by grantees in neurology and neurosurgery and not so much on rigorous clinical trials. This traditional form of knowledge acquisition remains important, but we need evidence that something works or—even better—helps the patient.

It is not so long ago—not longer than half a century ago—that patients with a severe brain injury were cared for on the ward until their demise. With significant improvement in neurological knowledge, we now provide comprehensive and complex care in a Neurosciences Intensive Care Unit and with considerable success. Although most of the early discoveries were made by non-neurointensivists, the reputation of several study groups is rising and all kinds of articles focused on the care of the neurocritically ill patient have appeared. It is good for any journal when we will know less and less about more and more (and not more and more about less and less).

The Neurocritical Care Society recognizes the academic side of the specialty very well, and this new year we open with a series of essays on the academics of Neurocritical Care and the Neurocritical Care Research Network. This administrative body is a serious attempt to streamline research and, in particular, large-scale clinical trials. In this issue we publish a series of thought-provoking articles about the aims and challenges of such an organization. Prior networks in general critical care have been very successful and there is no reason to doubt this initiative will be successful too.

It is not so long ago—not longer than a decade ago—that we started *Neurocritical Care*. But where does the Journal fit in, how will we advance the field and how can we maintain our academic credibility? Of course, the Journal should have an unbreakable link with Academia. In one respect, I thought it was simple and I would only look at scientific value. But I hear the following questions: Is the Journal a commodity? Can we make more money with the Journal? Can this industry sponsor this publication? How can we “game” the impact factor?

My answer would be that these issues should not be uppermost on an Editor’s mind. *Neurocritical Care* is here for exchange of ideas and important observations, for nuance and consideration of alternative views. We have no interest in promoting devices, instruments or other technology for the sole purpose of increasing revenue. Our purpose is curiosity and interest in the well-being of patients. We should be sincere academicians and our publications should advance our understanding of the field. That is the epitome to which we aspire. Any other way will cause distrust of our objectivity. These principles are sacrosanct. Scientific publications are our form of currency.

The impact factor of *Neurocritical Care* is slowly rising, and it will take time to become a “high impact” journal. There is a large body of literature on the strengths and weakness of the impact factor, but it is generally known that the impact factor favors papers with short citation lives, and the impact factor does not generally reflect utility of the article. Everybody knows the impact factor can be easily manipulated. Nevertheless, the impact factor will not disappear soon nor will advertisement of impact factors by journals stop. My main objective remains to just publish very good papers. A high impact factor will follow, but that should be a secondary goal.

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I recognize that the “built it so they’ll come” argument may also have its problems and may lead to overconfidence. It remains a difficult balancing act. A good recent development is that *Neurocritical Care* is now available and translated in abstracted form in China. The number of institutions with access to *Neurocritical Care* increased dramatically from 3,550 in 2009 to 6,159 in 2010.

In this area of new modernity, our publisher, Springer Science + Business Media, is keeping tabs on developments. The format of the journal may change in the digital age and who knows how you will read and digest all this information.

The journal has an attractive website with information on the most cited papers. This year will bring us an App. This year also will bring us video presentations by authors.

Again, with another year to come, I greatly thank the reviewers of manuscripts. These reviewers took the time to look at the submitted manuscripts despite being too busy in the unit, in the process of grant writing, traveling, soon going on vacation or having other overwhelming responsibilities. Despite all that, they agreed they would carefully assess the potential merit of a submitted manuscript, and they are listed below.

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