EDITORIAL

The "Impact Factor": Where Are We Headed?

Increasingly, a journal's impact factor is being used to judge the productivity of a researcher in terms of academic achievement. The impact factor relates to the number of times a journal's articles are cited in the literature. Recently, I was involved in assessing the research productivity of the faculty of another country's medical schools, to guide how funding would be allocated. Some of us on this panel argued successfully that the impact factor should not be used directly in a mathematical model, which would result in a score for each of the publications of the faculty. Clearly, there were some panelists who felt that this was the correct approach. Surely, many factors enter into why an author chooses to submit a paper to a particular journal, and many other factors enter into why a journal chooses to take a paper or decline it.

Among medical journals, which has the highest impact factor? You guessed it, the *New England Journal of Medicine* with a hefty 28.66 in 1998. However, not to be out done, *Nature Genetics* has an impact of 40.36, *Science* is at 24.39 and *Cell* is 38.69. Does that mean that all the papers in the *New England Journal of Medicine* are perfect and most highly relevant? Of course not! Nevertheless, the impact factor serves as some sort of guide in that there are some journals that I had never heard of, and indeed the impact factor was below 1. I will not give you any examples of these. However, there were a few journals I didn't know about, either, which had high impact factors.

A general criterion using the impact factor, which may be worthwhile, is a percentile ranking of how this journal rates within a particular field. Thus, among 53 obstetrics/gynecology (ob/gyn) journals, if you publish in a journal in the top 50th percentile (impact factor 26 and above), this is probably a reasonable paper in terms of productivity. Accordingly, if you publish in a journal in the top 25th percentile (13 and above), you are doing pretty well, at least among the ob/gyn peer group. I am happy to say *JSGI* is up there now: We are number 9! We have been moving up rapidly, as some of our readers may know. I have listed the impact factors of the top 13 ob/gyn journals in Table 1.

I need all your help. Let us keep up the momentum and keep our impact factor rising. It is clearly not a perfect indicator, but it is some assessment of quality and importance. The more our distinguished Society members and readers publish in *JSGI,* the higher the impact factor will go. I need your best papers.

Rogerio A. Lobo, MD
Editor-in-Chief

Table 1. The Top Ob/Gyn Journals According to Impact Factor in 1998

Rank	Journal	ISSN	Impact Factor
1	*Hum Reprod Update*	1355-4786	3.651
2	*Hum Reprod*	0268-1161	3.650
3	*Fertil Steril*	0015-0282	3.344
4	*Am J Obstet Gynecol*	0002-9378	2.634
5	*Placenta*	0143-4004	2.458
6	*Br J Obstet Gynaecol*	0306-5456	2.299
7	*Obstet Gynecol*	0029-7844	2.252
8	*Ultrasound Obstet Gynecol*	0960-7692	2.182
9	*J Soc Gynecol Investig*	1071-5576	2.000
10	*Prenat Diagn*	0197-3851	1.906
11	*Genitourin Med*	0266-4348	1.741
12	*Gynecol Oncol*	0090-8258	1.636
13	*Contraception*	0010-7824	1.615

1071-5576/00/$20.00
PII S1071-5576(99)00064-7