Impact, Not Just Impact Factor: Responding to the Manila Declaration on the Availability and Use of Health Research Information

The journal impact factor is defined as “the average number of times (citable) articles from the journal published in the past two years have been cited in the JCR (journal citation report) year.” An impact factor of 1.5 means that on average, articles published 1-2 years ago have been cited one and a half times in journals included in the Web of Science. The impact factor has been used, misused and abused to rank journals within a discipline (and by inference, rank authors who are published in these journals), to evaluate the scholarly worth of a journal (and by extension, the worth of articles published in it), to decide institutional journal subscriptions, and to guide authors in choosing where to aim to submit articles to. But as has been eloquently pointed out by Amit Joshi the impact factor of a journal is not the same as its impact, or the impact of individual journal articles: A high impact factor journal may have zero impact in a remote Pacific island, just as a low impact (or no impact factor journal) may have very high impact in the country where it is read. More importantly, an article may achieve awesome impact, even if it is published in a low (or no) impact factor journal.

“To achieve real impact, and not just impact factor,” the “Manila Declaration on the Availability and Use of Health Research Information in and for Low- and Middle-income Countries in the Asia Pacific Region” was launched at the 2015 Convention of the Asia Pacific Association of Medical Journal Editors (APAME 2015) held in Manila from 24 to 26 August 2015 in conjunction with the COHRED Global Forum on Research and Innovation for Health (FORUM 2015). It is concurrently published by Journals linked to APAME and listed in the Index Medicus of the South East Asia Region (IMSEAR) and the Western Pacific Region Index Medicus (WPRIM), and is published as a Special Announcement in this issue. It is also available online at http://www.wpro.who.int/entity/apame/publications/en/ and at http://www.hifa2015.org/wp-content/uploads/Manila_Declaration_2015_FINAL_August_242.pdf and at http://www.equator-network.org/2015/08/28/the-manila-declaration/

The APAME 2015 convention in Manila was a meaningful and a memorable experience for the 500 editors, reviewers, authors, researchers, clinicians, scientists, students, librarians and publishers who joined us from all over the Philippines and around the world. Our participation in the New Leaders for Health Pre-Forum at the Philippine International Convention Center on
August 22, our General Assembly and Joint Meeting with the Western Pacific Region Index Medicus and Index Medicus of the South East Asia Regions at the WHO Western Pacific Region Office on August 24, the Conjoint Sessions with the COHRED Global Forum on Research and Innovation for Health at the PICC from August 24-27 (broadcast on CNN Philippines), the APAME 2015 Convention at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Hotel on August 25-26 (culminating in a HIFA Tweetchat), and 8th National Medical Writing Workshop and 1st Writeshop for Young Researchers at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Hotel from August 27-28, comprised scientific sessions, workshops, discussions, special events and socials that were exemplary and inspiring.

Through the Manila Declaration launched at the APAME 2015, we committed “ourselves and our journals to publishing innovative and solution-focused research in all healthcare and related fields … particularly health research applicable to low- and middle-income countries;” and committed “ourselves and our publishers to disseminating scientific, healthcare and medical knowledge fairly and impartially by developing and using … indices … databases … and open data systems.”

Thus the response of the *Philipp J Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg* “to explore new paradigms, trends and innovations, especially with regard the social media… and “to consider the transition to a full open access model and adopting Creative Commons licenses.” With this issue, we begin that transition, by aligning our journal with the requirements for indexing in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), “an online directory that indexes and provides access to high quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals.” An important part of this transition involves replacing the copyright transfer the Philippine Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery requires of all authors published in our journal, with a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license.

We are also activating our Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn pages, and encourage published authors, reviewers, editors and readers to “like,” “tweet,” and comment on our published material and the discussions, blogs and microblogs that will arise from these. To this end, we will initiate the practice of posting “laymanized abstracts” of published scientific material on our social media sites, by requesting authors of articles accepted for publication to submit such abstracts.

Meanwhile, we urgently need to improve our competencies in research, medical writing, and peer review – and this applies to young residents and senior consultants alike. While the quantity of manuscripts submitted to the journal has increased exponentially, the quality of these manuscripts leave much to be desired, as evinced by our tedious and thankless review and editing process. It is ironic that we are invited to speak on and conduct post-graduate courses and workshops in research, medical writing, peer review and editing by many other societies, colleges, academies, institutions, organizations and ministries around the country and abroad, but hardly within our very own Philippine Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery. Be that as it may, our Fellows, Diplomates and Residents need regular medical writing and review workshops in order to improve the quality and impact of our journal articles, and consequently improve the impact of our journal. To this end, we all need to leave our comfort zones and welcome change.

*Pace Heraclitus, “no man steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man,” because “Τιναρα Πει (Panta Rei)—All is Change.” These transitions will not come easily, nor will they happen overnight. But they are imperative if we are to uphold our commitment “to achieve real impact, and not just impact factor, as we advance free and open access to health information and publication that improves global health-related quality of life.”*

**REFERENCES**

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