

Impact factor - the reputation gauge of the journals: An overview

Sir,

Journal impact factor (JIF) is a common entity that health care professionals usually come across. But most of them don't know what is the journal impact factor, what is the method for calculating the journal impact factor and how it can be utilized. The Impact factor of a journal is not associated to the factors like quality of peer review process and quality of content of the journal but is a measure that reflects the average number of citations to articles published in journals, books, thesis, project reports, newspapers, conference/ seminar proceedings, documents published in internet, notes and any other approved documents (by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) or similar body).

Impact factor is commonly used to evaluate the relative importance of a journal within its field and to measure the frequency with which the "average article" in a journal has been cited in a particular time period. Journal which publishes more review articles will get highest impact factors. Journals with higher impact factors believed to be more important than those with lower ones.^[1] According to Eugene Garfield "Impact simply reflects the ability of the journals and editors to attract the best paper available".^[2] Journal which publishes more review articles will get maximum impact factors.

Impact factor can be calculated after completing the minimum of three years of publication; therefore Journal Impact Factor cannot be calculated for new journals. In a given year, the impact factor of a journal is the average number of citations received per article published in that journal during the two preceding years. For example, if a journal has an impact factor of three in 2008, then its papers published in 2006 and 2007 received three citations each on average in 2008. The 2008 impact factors are actually published in 2009; they cannot be calculated until all of the 2008 publications have been processed by the indexing agency (*Thomson Reuters*). The IF for the biomedical journals may range up to 5-8 percent.^[3] The IF of any journal may be calculated by the formula.

2012 impact factor = A/B

Where

A is the number of times articles published in 2010 and 2011 were cited by indexed journals during 2012.

B is the total number of citable items like articles and reviews published by that journal in 2010 and 2011.

This letter is an attempt to draw an attention towards the potential significance of journal impact factor and I hope it will assist and guide the researchers in this direction.

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