

The importance of being indexed in MEDLINE

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Dear Editor-in-Chief,*

A recent bibliometric analysis, carried out by the Centre for Evaluation in Education and Science (1), has shown that 472 journals were published in Serbia, in the period 2002 to 2004, 63 of which were in the field of biomedicine. Evidently only a small number can truly be regarded as scientific journals (due to their irregular publication, absence of peer-reviews, and low standard of submitted papers).

The quality of a journal is the most important prerequisite for it to be included in the international scientific data system, enabling it to become globally recognized (2,3). Only a few Serbian biomedical journals have succeeded in becoming indexed in the world data base - five in Medline (*Medicinski Pregled - Medical Review, Acta chirurgica iugoslavica, Vojnosanitetski pregled, Srpski arhiv za celokupno lekarstvo - Serbian Archives of Medicine, Glas SANU* - in this order according to the categorization based on the citation index), and only one (*Acta Veterinaria*) in Current Contents - Life Sciences.

One of the indicators used in the afore mentioned analysis is the citation index, which defines the impact of a journal. Based on citation analysis (autocitation, heterocitation, foreign citation), and impact factors for a three-year period, a national journal is graded accordingly in one of five categories (on a descending scale). A rather disappointing fact is that a third of all the Serbian biomedical journals have no citations, and respectively no impact, which places them in the lowest - category 5; 24 are slightly better - in category 4. There are no journals in category 1, and in category 2 there are only five (*Vojnosanitetski pregled, Serbian Archive of Medicine, Glas SANU*) (Table 1).

Table 1. Categorization of national biomedical journals

Category	No of journals (n)	%
1	0	0
2	5	8
3	13	20,6
4	24	38,1
5	21	33,3
Total	63	100

It is interesting to note that some of the journals (*Archive of Oncology, Balneoclimatology*), which are not in the Medline database, are classified in a higher category than those that are indexed in Medline (*Acta chirurgica iugoslavica, Vojnosanitetski pregled, Serbian Archive of Medicine, Glas SANU*) (4).

As stated earlier (5), we believe that this cannot be satisfactory for any editor of a medical journal classified in categories 4 and 5 (two-thirds of all journals) nor for any author who has published his/her work in them. In the past ten years, the editorial of our oldest medical journal - *The Serbian Archive for Comprehensive Medicine* - has on two occasions held a symposium on the editing of medical journals (6), and editors of several other national journals have organized seminars with the same theme (7-9). It has always been

stressed at these meetings that the editors' main aim is to achieve quality which would lead to the scientific journals indexing in significant data bases, as well as greater visibility/accessibility and influence at an international level. This is not easily accomplished, but possible if financial and other means of support were to be provided for the best rated national journals, and if appreciated in accordance with the award of research and academic degrees and titles of their authors, as well as for approved research projects of the Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection, a significant step towards this goal would be made.

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