

# Over the Journal Impact Factor

Sung-Tae Hong

Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Korean Medical Science

Thomson Reuters reports journal impact factor (JIF) 2012 through its web database, Journal Citation Reports (JCR) (<http://apps.webofknowledge.com>) for journals indexed in the Science Citation Index (SCI/SCIE). Many top journals are reported to continue their high JIF and most of others keep similar or increased ones as JIF 2011. The JCR updates JIF every year and the JIF 2012 will be used for the coming one year as a global quantitative indicator of scientific journals and articles.

The Korean Journal of Medical Science (JKMS) achieves 1.249 as its JIF 2012 which has been increased from 0.993 JIF 2011. Thanks to the new JIF, JKMS is ranked 71 by JIF among 151 journals of Medicine, General & Internal scope in 2012 while it was 85 in 2011. JKMS published 347 and 272 articles in 2010 and 2011 respectively. Cites in 2012 to items published in 2010 were 502 and in 2011 were 271, which counted JIF 1.249. Another indicator, total cites, of JKMS in 2012 was 3,197 which was increased much from 2,606 in 2011. JKMS is ranked 32 by the total cites among the 151 journals. Self-cites were counted 7% in 2012. These indicators suggest the global contribution of JKMS as a citable scientific resource in medicine general.

Journals publish articles to deliver new scientific information to audience of a certain scope. The JIF is a good indicator of a journal's fame, and authors want to publish their articles in journals of high JIF as possible. That is why publication of articles in journals of high JIF is seriously competitive. Compared to this, journals of low JIF or unindexed are facing serious shortage of articles. JIF holds the power of a journal's fate.

There have been many comments that warn the tyranny or limitations of JIF (1, 2). The JIF is a really powerful global index of journal evaluation. An article in a journal of high JIF is commonly accepted as good and its author is regarded as an excellent researcher. However, the JIF should be used for journal evaluation only but not for assessing articles or researchers as the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment announced (3). That is quite reasonable and many editors have expressed their agreements. I would agree either. In this context, several other alternative indices are recommended to supplement the limitations of JIF (4). The exact index should be used for the purpose of evaluation.

The JIF has been extraordinarily mighty in Korea. JIF of publications of a researcher decides almost everything in recruitment, funding, renewal, promotion, and tenure. The 'all-mighty

JIF strategy' of research evaluation was indispensable to upgrade research quality within a short period in Korea. There have been some complaints for the strategy but it was accepted and applied in all fields of science. Anyone who complained it has been regarded as incompetent. However, I dare to say "Let's think about abuse of JIF in Korea. Is it forever? Is it enough for evaluation of research? When and how can we be appeased from JIF fetters?"

In Korea, many kinds of medical journals are published. Member journals of the Korean Association of Medical Journal Editors (KAMJE, [www.kamje.or.kr](http://www.kamje.or.kr)) are 225. Of them, 197 are indexed in the KoreaMed ([www.koreamed.org](http://www.koreamed.org)) and 136 provide their Open Access full texts in the Synapse ([synapse.koreamed.org](http://synapse.koreamed.org)). A total of 27 KAMJE journals are indexed in the SCI/SCIE of Thomson Reuters (5). The journals which are not indexed in the SCI/SCIE are trying their best to be indexed. On the other hand, the indexed journals are trying to increase their JIF. In other words, all of the Korean journals are eager to survive global competition only through the SCI/SCIE due to the 'all-mighty JIF strategy'. It is necessary to diversify evaluation indicators of scholarly journals and research-related activities. Although the publication environment is not so favorable in Korea, medical journals have been upgraded much by great efforts of editing.

I would encourage authors and researchers to cite more relevant articles from Korean journals. That is the right way for Korean journals to make more global impacts and to overcome the fetters of JIF.

## REFERENCES

1. Pulverer B. *Impact fact-or fiction?* *EMBO J* 2013; 32: 1651-2.
2. Alberts B. *Impact factor distortions.* *Science* 2013; 340: 787.
3. Cagan R. *The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment.* *Dis Model Mech* 2013. doi: 10.1242/dmm/012955.
4. Saxena A, Thawani V, Chakrabarty M, Gharpure K. *Scientific evaluation of the scholarly publications.* *J Pharmacol Pharmacother* 2013; 4: 125-9.
5. Suh CO, Oh SJ, Hong ST. *Korean Association of Medical Journal Editors at the forefront of improving the quality and indexing chances of its member journals.* *J Korean Med Sci* 2013; 28: 648-50.

Address for Correspondence:

Sung-Tae Hong, MD

Editor-in-Chief, J Korean Med Sci

Department of Parasitology, Seoul National University, College of Medicine, Seoul, Korea  
Tel: +82.2-740-8373, Fax: +82.2-765-6142, E-mail: [jkms@kams.or.kr](mailto:jkms@kams.or.kr)