



Letter to the Editor

Comment regarding the article “Comparative metrics of neurosurgical scientific journals: What do they mean to readers?”

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“The best way to predict the future is to create it” [Abraham Lincoln].

The team of James Ausman is to be congratulated for their article entitled “Comparative metrics of neurosurgical scientific journals: What do they mean to readers?” recently published in Surgical Neurology International.^[2] This is an original study on an unusual topic rarely addressed by editors/publishers worldwide. This paper is really a thought-provoking issue that makes us analyze ourselves at all levels. If possible, I would like to add a few points in this context.

Bibliometrics is a meta-science that takes science as its object of study. It concerns three elements of scientific activity: its inputs, its outputs, and its impacts.^[9] Conventionally, bibliometric methods have been used to trace relationships among academic journal citations. From only one or two measures, we can get false conclusions. The use of multiple measures ensures a better view of the total influence of a journal. As mentioned by Ausman *et al.*, new metrics should be considered for evaluating academic journals, especially with the development of social media.^[2] Alongside the classic metric tools used by the authors of the article, many other measures must be considered in particular journal acceptance rate which was the percentage of manuscripts accepted for publication, compared to all manuscripts submitted in a given year. Open access journals had higher acceptance rates than subscription only journals. Low acceptance rates are typically correlated with older journals, with limited output, and high citation receipt.^[7] Many other “no standardized indicators” start to be largely used to assess the multidimensional phenomena of a journal’s influence such as Eigen factor, cited half-life, immediacy index data, article influence, percent papers cited versus uncited, number of recommendations, readings, comments, sharing, followers, requested alerts, and many other factors impacting the audience attention (i.e., Altmetrics). Consequently, “Citation index” must evolve in this direction. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that numbers and statistics can be manipulated. Each measure must be analyzed as to its usefulness and its strength that can be represented with regard to new perspectives on the value of the journal. The most important thing is to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each journal to improve them. In addition, readers and authors should understand the context and the rules of scientific publishing especially with the recent technological development.^[8] In this perspective, medical writing and bibliometrics must be integrated into the academic training of every future neurosurgeon.

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It is obvious that scientific publishing has positive consequences on the medical education and training, scientific innovation, and ultimately on the population's healthcare. Peer-reviewed medical journals are an important, established, and credible means for scientific communication which is an essential support for researchers and the medical community. Historically, academic journals are also used in the benefit of permanent and transparent forum for the presentation, review, and discussion of research and not to make money. Both readers and authors are important for the survival of academic journals. However, journals' authors are generally not paid. Among many other reasons of writing, there are the continuing medical education, the promotion to an academic position, and the gain of international recognition as experts in a particular field.^[1] A scientific writer never has a vacation. For him/her, life consists of either writing or thinking about writing. But what motivates us to write every day? Doing research and collaborating with foreign researchers are above all a question of love, passion, and pleasure. Most academics work hard and are captivated by what they do. Medical writing is a real passion, but unlike love, the fire does not weaken overtime. Nevertheless, reading and medical writing should not be a luxury reserved for seniors' academicians in developed countries. Benjamin Disraeli had wisely said “The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but reveal to him his own.”

In many developing countries, it is frequently difficult to search, access, and share scientific information. There are some difficulties attributed to many reasons, in particular, the lack of publication culture, the unfamiliarity with the English language, the lack of financial resources and qualified personnel, as well as the lack of recognition, motivation and incentives.^[1,11] However, among the most important difficulties, there is the access to bibliographic references. It is really hard to continue to publish without having access to relevant bibliographic references. The solution is not simple. Authors from developing countries will have to use their imagination and creativity that they developed over their career: looking for friends abroad, contact the authors personally so that they can send you their publication, using scientific networking sites (i.e.: ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Mendeley...),^[6] or unfortunately hacking passwords or downloading articles using nonstandard sites like Sci-hub.^[10]

Furthermore, the young generation of medical doctors, faculty members, and researchers tend to use easier open access publications. Nonetheless, under the pressure of publishing articles as soon as possible, the “Publish or Perish syndrome” can quickly turn into “Publish and Perish syndrome” where the rules (Code of Publication Ethics) are not respected in many predatory online journals (known as write-only publishing or deceptive publishing).^[5,8] Predatory publishing is an exploitive academic publishing business model that involves charging publication fees to

authors without checking articles for quality and legitimacy and without providing the other editorial and publishing services.^[5] Most young authors may not be able to differentiate predatory journals from legitimate journals; hence, the esteemed senior faculties shall act as mentors and help these potential professionals in selecting the best possible journals to get peer recognition and deliver usefully in assisting in determining better programs. In addition, publishers and journal editors should provide more opportunities to authors from developing countries to publish their research and challenging ideas.^[1] Moreover, support from international associations and institutions is also needed to improve our specialty.^[4]

In conclusion, the involvement of young neurosurgeons in medical writing will surely improve the quality of their scientific work and their practice, and of course, bring definite benefits for the patients. The culture of medical writing and publications must go through initial training. With the development of online journal publishers and scientific social media platforms, knowledge increases, and we need new strategies to be in a much better position than our seniors.^[3]

I am very grateful for the opportunity to learn from Professor James Ausman and to work with him and Professor Nancy Epstein in a true international academic journal.

Declaration of patient consent

Patient's consent not required as patients identity is not disclosed or compromised.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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