

## An Account on the Count of Mushrooming Journals!

Sir,

Five years down the lane, my mailbox used to be filled with mails from all round the globe declaring me a winner and ready to shell out a lot of money as rewards. Nowadays, my mailbox blooms with journal Editors' mails, and every journal claims to be world class and indexed with multiple agencies. It really is a matter of surprise to know are we conducting so much research that its numbers are increasing day by day. Every journal seems to be a peer-reviewed journal but are there actually so many reviewers available?

In the present scenario, there is a massive increase in submitted manuscripts with no surety of unbiased scientific quality control.

Indeed, although there are strong attempts to reduce bias and break down traditional barriers improving transparency and increasing the flow of information, an important fraction of the whole equation somehow seems to get omitted in this process.

So the question arises, what we are offering to readers? Is there actually a need for such an extensive knowledge or are we willing to quench our thirst by knowledge derived from a real good piece of work. If yes, then what are measures that can be implemented to provide excellence in terms of research?

There should be vital measures to be able to cope with the escalating research output over the next decade considering the ease with which information can now be delivered at the readers' end.

The current systems of disseminating research through journals have many deficiencies owing to the fact that there are so many journals and even greater number of publishers; therefore, it becomes difficult for the readers to regain and retain information. Conventionally, although articles were considered to be published once they appeared in a paper journal, it was a general agreement that the academic community should have had prior knowledge of the work, from presentations at meetings, abstracts, and various other proceedings.

The concept of e-printing (electronic preprints) has recently come up in a very appealing way. E-prints are versions of articles that get circulated through the internet before their publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The e-print appears to be substantially the first form of scientific communication.<sup>[1]</sup> Further, two major contentions are put forth against e-printing. The first is that there is a buildup of an inferior quality in information, which eventually is worthless to researchers. The evidence is suggestive of the fact that with persistence, even the most flawed work will eventually find a place.<sup>[2]</sup> Noticeably not more than 5% of articles which get published in recent journals carry a scientifically sound message which is actually pertinent to doctors at large.<sup>[3]</sup>

The second proposition is that many research findings that are not reviewed already find their way into the public arena through authors and conferences, which may be read by the doctors as a garbled account and they may have no way of accessing an appraised full study.<sup>[4]</sup> We firmly believe and hope that e-printing in clinical medicine should help rather than impede the way of clinical and health researchers.

A total of 5278 journals have been indexed for MEDLINE till November 2017.

MEDLINE is a type of journal citation database of the National Library of Medicine which incorporates journals which are included as citations in the Index Medicus and also various other journals that are not included in the same.

Around 4979 journals are presently indexed with Index Medicus.<sup>[5]</sup> There are about 572 journals which are non-Index Medicus released in various fields:

- 90 journals in dentistry
- 18 journals in AIDS/HIV
- 15 journals in consumer health
- 183 journals in nursing
- 101 journals in health-care administration and delivery
- 85 journals in health-care technology indexed
- 80 journals in history of medicine core journals indexed [Table 1].

Shouldn't these money making entities be curtailed? Let us point out reasons for a multitude of journals currently available.

- Success in publishing has enormous professional relevance

**Table 1: Number of titles currently indexed for index Medicus, and MEDLINE on PubMed**

Subset of Journals currently indexed	Number of journals
Journals indexed as Index Medicus	4979
Additional, non-Index Medicus journals in the following areas	299
Dentistry (contribute to citation subset=D)	52
AIDS/HIV (contribute to citation subset=X)	5
Consumer health (contribute to citation subset=K)	9
Nursing (contribute to citation subset=N)	113
Health-care administration and delivery (contribute to citation subset=H)	38
Health-care technology indexed by NICHSR/NLM (contribute to citation subset=T)	51
History of medicine core journals indexed fully by HMD/NLM (contribute to citation subset=Q or QIS)	31

[https://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/num\\_titles.html](https://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/num_titles.html), NICHSR: National Information Center on Health Services Research and Health Care Technology, NLM: National Library of Medicine, HMD: History of Medicine Division, QIS: Query integrator system

- It is a sure shot way to get the work published because these journals hardly reject any article until and unless the paper is absurd or absolute rubbish
- Suits all ranges of pockets
- Easily accessible (especially e-prints)
- Facilitates promotion
- Increases the weight of one's CV
- Helps in achieving a lead over your peers for the upcoming job
- Generating a successful grant award.

What if it is not curbed down:

- A journal may perish and at a later stage subside due to a paucity of articles
- No standard is maintained
- Most of them have no printed version in circulation
- The credibility of indexing agencies is questionable
- Act as a transient estate corner to allow minimal scrutiny (for slander, breach of patient confidentiality, etc.)
- Once posted, articles can be retracted but they are not removed from the server.

I chose this journal to write and project my views so that such an increasing infliction can be restrained. We have to question ourselves, "Do we want an increase in good quality research or simply a mere increase in number of articles?" We have a moral duty to propagate the information globally and generate a two-way flow of information for the public. Generating equity in health-care and scientific endeavors in all corners of the world then becomes a priority.

Most health professionals not involved in research would prefer information in an easily scrutinized and digestible form.<sup>[5]</sup>

Whether publications will enrich to permit the scientific or research community to peruse e-print servers, who deliver the wealth of mushrooming information, still remains to be observed. In the case of journals that earn their money by demanding payment from authors, as many of the new electronic periodicals currently do, it is obvious that the greater number of articles they published, the more they earn.<sup>[6]</sup>

When a budding young scientist publishes his/her research appreciably well, he/she would definitely gain financially in the form of funds or research grants from various agencies and would be entitled for promotion and upgrade his/her impact on the citations of the publications. So instead of good quality research, when a number of substandard and inferior quality studies are published, both the authors as well as the publishers are benefitted.

On one hand such a practice could be beneficial for the financial prudence of the journal and a boon for the upcoming researcher but whether the scenario is really worthwhile for the readers is still questionable.

Although it is unlikely to have a check on the number of journals, there should be a regulatory body which can rate/grade the journals. One may say that there is a system of rating the journals by its impact factor but it comes late and even many good journals have not been rated on such grounds. Therefore, a more serious, sincere, and an honest approach is quintessential.

### Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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Access this article online	
Quick Response Code: 	Website: <a href="http://www.ijcep.org">www.ijcep.org</a>
	DOI: 10.4103/ijcep.ijcep_9_18

**How to cite this article:** Kothari R, Bokariya P, Nongrum SM, Singh R. An account on the count of mushrooming journals!. Int J Clin Exp Physiol 2018;5:54-5.

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