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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Influence of Article Type on the Impact Factor of Dermatology Journals[☆]

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KEYWORDS

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Abstract

Background and objective: For scientific journals, achieving a high impact factor (IF) has become a goal in its own right. Our aim was to describe the influence of article type on the IF of dermatology journals.

Material and methods: We used the Scopus database to calculate an IF for *Actas Derma-Sifiliográficas* and the major dermatology journals, excluding articles without abstracts, letters to the editor, and conference proceedings. Included articles were classified into 4 categories: case reports, original articles, narrative reviews, and other. We also calculated the mean IF for each article type. We then compared our results with IFs published by the Institute for Scientific Information.

Results: The proportion of each type of article differed between journals. Original articles carried the greatest weight in the major journals (BJD, 76.8%; Contact, 81.1%; JAAD, 63.4%; JAMA Dermatol, 63.7%.) but not in *Actas Derma-Sifiliográficas*, where only 31.7% were original research articles. A higher IF was associated with the publication of reviews and original articles; a lower IF was associated with the publication of case reports and other article types.

Conclusions: Publishing case reports, which have lower citation rates, leads to a lower IF. Publishing reviews and original articles will lead to a higher IF. Journals that seek a higher IF should probably publish more reviews and original articles and fewer case reports. Editorial boards should seek a balance between the interests of their clinician readers and the journal's need for a higher IF.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Factor de impacto;
Casos clínicos;
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Influencia de los distintos tipos de artículo en el factor de impacto de las revistas dermatológicas**Resumen**

Introducción y objetivos: Para las revistas científicas el factor de impacto (FI) se ha convertido en un objetivo en sí mismo. El objetivo de nuestro estudio es describir la influencia de los distintos tipos de artículo en el FI de las revistas dermatológicas.

Material y métodos: Empleando la base de datos Scopus hemos reproducido los cálculos del FI de 2015 de Actas Dermo-Sifiliográficas y las principales revistas dermatológicas. Hemos eliminado artículos sin resumen, cartas al editor y actas de congresos. Los artículos incluidos se clasificaron en casos clínicos, artículos originales, revisiones narrativas y «otros». Calculamos el FI medio para cada tipo de artículo. Los datos obtenidos son comparados con los proporcionados por el Institute for Scientific Information.

Resultados: Las revistas tienen distribuciones diferentes en cuanto a tipos de artículos predominantes. Los originales son los artículos que más se publican en las revistas analizadas (BJD: 76,8%, Contact: 81,1%, JAAD: 63,4%, JAMA Dermatol: 63,7%), a excepción de Actas, en la que corresponden el 31,7% de los artículos publicados. Los tipos de artículo que se asocian con un FI medio menor al global son los casos clínicos y otros, mientras que revisiones y originales tienen un mayor FI.

Conclusiones: Los casos clínicos, al ser menos citados, disminuyen el FI medio de la revista. Revisiones y originales aumentan el FI. Las revistas centradas en mejorar el FI podrían publicar menos casos y más revisiones y originales. Los comités editoriales deben mantener un equilibrio entre la necesidad de aumentar su FI y el interés de los lectores clínicos.

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Introduction

The impact factor (IF) has come to carry increasing weight in journal evaluation and management, and editorial boards logically discuss strategies to improve theirs. One such a strategy is selecting article types that will attract the largest number of citations. As some journals have decided to prioritize certain article types, they have reduced the number of pages allotted to others, such as case reports.¹

Initially conceived as an indicator for comparing the influence, or impact, of scientific journals,² the IF is now seen as a reflection of a journal's quality and prestige, even though that use may be inappropriate.³ The Web of Knowledge of the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) publishes an annual list of IFs for all journals indexed in their database, the Web of Science. The lists are known as the Journal Citation Reports. To be selected for indexing in the ISI's Web of Science, a journal must meet certain criteria, such as the regular publication of issues, the ease with which cited sources can be recovered, the language of publication (full text in English, sources in English), and content (a range of articles of scientific interest that includes emerging topics).⁴

A journal's IF is calculated for a calendar year (2015, for example) and is expressed as the quotient of a fraction in which the numerator is the number of citations the journal received that year by articles indexed in a specific database (such as the ISI's) and the denominator is the number of articles published by the journal in the 2 preceding years (ie, those published in 2014 and 2013 for a 2015 IF). Thus, the quotient reflects the average overall citation rate for a journal's articles in a given year.⁵

The numerator includes all references made to any article published in a journal, making the IF a direct reflection of the number of citations attracted. The more articles the journal publishes, the more articles can be cited, favoring a higher IF. Journals on more specialized clinical topics like dermatology will, a priori, have lower IFs than general medical journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*.⁶ To illustrate the effect of specialization, it is sufficient to note that the highest IF in dermatology in 2015 (6.915) was earned by the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*. In contrast, the *New England Journal of Medicine*'s IF for the same year was 59.558.⁷

The denominator includes only the articles an index such as the ISI's classifies as citable. Given a high IF's influence on visibility and even on a journal's income, many editorial boards that prioritize this metric will apply various strategies to achieve it. If, for example, a report is published as a letter to the editor, the ISI will include a reference to it in the numerator, but the letter will be omitted from the denominator because it is not classified as a citable publication. Journals therefore publish information in letters to lower the number of citable articles and thereby raise the quotient. Other ways to raise an IF include publishing reviews, original articles from well-known research groups, and studies of common diseases; journals may even decide to reject certain articles they believe will attract few citations.⁸ For this reason many researchers have explored how article type influences citation rates. For example, a study comparing citations received by ear-nose-throat journals in the UK showed that review articles received 2-fold more citations than case reports on average.⁹

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