
EDITORIAL

APJCP Loss of SCI Expanded Listing and the Future of the Journal

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On the 19th of May we received a communication from Thomson Reuter that the Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention was dropped from coverage in SCI Expanded on April 22, 2015, after the last 2014 issue was processed. Prior to this we had received no warning whatsoever and indeed were not directly contacted by their Head Office, rather having to make a request for information through the Korean Thomson Reuter office.

They stated:

The reasons for the drop were a high number of self-citations, large increase in volume, and a requirement from the journal to cite other articles in the same journal (which is in part what lead to the high self-citation rate). In addition, the last 5 issues of 2014 were receipted in our system in March of 2015, which is a bit late. The general quality of the journal was declining and we decided it no longer met our requirements for coverage.

In response I as Chief Editor wrote an email sent on May 21st, after discussions with a number of members of the Editorial Board:

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for your clarification regarding 'dropping' coverage of the APJCP on April 22nd, received on May 19th.

We have naturally given much thought to your reasons and hope you will forgive some pertinent comments. The APJCP is the only international journal focusing on cancer research in Asia which has a positive policy regarding publication from the developing world. As you must undoubtedly be aware, publication in established journals in the USA and Europe poses an immense problem for authors from most countries of the Asian Pacific. This is naturally one of the reasons for the high numbers of self citations. If a scientist from ---- or ----, for example (I could easily add another dozen countries), performs research work and wishes to cite related papers in the literature, the vast majority of them are to be found in the APJCP itself.

Asia contains two thirds of the population of the world and cancer is a major problem everywhere. It is natural that improvement of research capacity is reflected in an increasing number of submissions. We receive about 400 submissions every month of which over 60% are rejected. Through our link to PubMed we receive over 45,000 hits every month - this is concrete evidence of a marked interest in the journal and the published research findings by the scientific community. We do not apologise for increasing the number of papers published in response to a real need. It is unequivocally not a requirement of the journal that papers from the APJCP be cited - very many manuscripts are accepted which do not include any references from its pages. We do have a policy to promote research from the Asian Pacific region but this is only in the interests of comprehensive literature coverage - it is only fair to other authors working in the same area. Regarding the nebulous concept of quality, the research situation in most of the Asian Pacific can not be compared to that prevailing in the developed world. The generally lower level of resources, whether financial, linguistic or in expertise, is of course taken into account in our acceptance for publication of many research reports. It is the relevance to cancer control and policies to reduce the burden of the disease which is our greatest priority. This is our responsibility as the official journal for the Asian Pacific Organization for Cancer Prevention.

We do not understand how receipt of the last issues of 2014 was delayed - we uploaded to PubMed on a very timely basis. Since we were not given any warning or notification of any period of probation the unfortunate scientists published in Issues 1-9 of this year will not have the benefit of SCI Expanded indexing through no fault of their own or the APJCP. Is it possible that the indexing can proceed at least for the issues in question? For

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the meantime we are acting responsibly by letting all the authors know the situation and have deleted mention of SCI Expanded listing and any impact factor from our website on the main page, with further information available in the information for authors section.

It is profoundly saddening that an organization like Thomson Reuter does not take such considerations into account when making a decision which will have a major impact on the research community, not only here in the Asian Pacific but increasingly also in South America and former Eastern European countries who similarly find it very difficult to have their hard-earned research findings published in established journals elsewhere.

Thank you for your time, Sincerely, Malcolm Moore Ph.D. APJCP Chief Editor apocpcontrol@yahoo.com

On May 22nd we received a message from Thomson Reuter without specific answers to my comments and stating that they would not process any further issues of the journal. They further stated that their journal evaluation process takes into account a large number of factors, including regionality, topic, relevance, citations and the concerns and needs of their customers, as detailed in <http://wokinfo.com/essays/journal-selection-process/>.

It is my sad duty to provide this information so that all of the members of the APOCP are fully aware of the situation. I was naturally disappointed that the points I raised were not addressed in any specific form. The editorial written earlier in the year explaining APJCP editorial policy was unfortunately without positive impact (Moore et al., 2015). Regarding the question of late receipt, Issues 20-24 of Volume 14 were uploaded onto PubMed on Nov 6th, Nov 25th, Dec 18th, Jan 5th and Jan 21st, respectively. While it appears that issues 1 to 9 from 2015 will not be indexed, all were published by May 18, and the APJCP could still be seen as an SCI-E journal on that day. Hopefully that will mean that some official recognition will be given to the included papers by your institutions. Alternatively, you can make an appeal to Thomson Reuter to reconsider non-indexing. I have been informed that they occasionally may relent if there are a large number of requests.

Naturally, I understand that many authors will have to consider their careers and submit their papers to journals other than the APJCP in the future. Submitted papers not yet uploaded onto PubMed can simply be retracted. However, we will try to continue as a PubMed and Scopus indexed forum for publication of cancer related research as long as there are scientists who do wish to use its pages. Further discussion of the future of the journal must wait until the 8th General Assembly Conference of the APOCP which is scheduled for April 2016 in Brisbane, Australia.

We should thank Thomson Reuter for the period of indexing in SCI Expanded, since it has given the APJCP the opportunity to help scientists publish and develop their careers in institutions placing emphasis on an Impact Factor. Our contribution to infrastructure development in this sense has not been inconsiderable. It is to be hoped that other journals will be able to take over this particular responsibility for Asian Pacific scientists in the future. Perhaps it will be possible for the APJCP to be listed once again at some time. The most important thing is that research into combatting cancer continues and results in effective cancer control programs across our region.

To take responsibility for the present less than optimal status of the journal, which rests firmly on my own

shoulders, I tendered my resignation to the APOCP Board but have been asked to continue for the present, I will do so until next year in the hope that the APJCP can continue to be of service to the Asian Pacific cancer research community in the future.

References

- Moore MA, Lim MK, Huang X (2015). Clarification of the APJCP editorial policy. *Asian Pac J Cancer Prev*, **16**, 2589-90.