

## SHOULD WE REALLY BE CHASING THE IMPACT FACTOR?

The first thing I (DB) learned when I joined the Editorial Board of *Kinesiology* back in 2008 was that Impact Factor (IF) is the single most important metric for a journal. Pursuing that “crazy” number was the ultimate goal everybody in the Editorial Board was focused on. Even though the IF has been recognized a long time ago as a misleading and flawed measure of research quality, for many reasons (Eston, 2005), and too highly valued by research community (Davies, 2003), we still tend to judge journals by their position on the Journal Citation Report (JCR) list. Such labeling creates a number of problems, especially for new or low-impact journals such as *Kinesiology*. Firstly, these journals are usually not the first selection for publishing research and are often considered as publication platform for “lesser” papers. Secondly, finding peer reviewers willing to join the body of referees is sometimes “mission impossible” and you have to be Tom Cruise with an IMF team to make it happen. The reasoning behind a huge rejection rate by requested peer reviewers is probably the same as the reasoning creating the first problem. Scientists with high H-indexes are usually engaged as editors and/or reviewers in higher-impact journals and there is no time and/or willingness to review for “smaller” journals. This leaves the journal between a rock and a hard place. The Editorial Board has its obligation to the scientific community to publish papers which make real contributions to science, those with the potential to expand current scientific knowledge, the ones “seeking the Truth” (Foster, et al., 2016). However, due to its JCR position, the journal is forced to do that with limited or no help from that same scientific community. Identification of the highest quality papers relies greatly on rigorous review process performed by leading scientists in a certain topic area and, basically, the level of scrutiny should be the same in a low-impact journal as it is in a high-impact one. Growing scientific interest in sport science research (Lippi, Guidi, Nevill, & Boreham, 2008) results in more papers submitted to journals, and an increase in median IF of the sport sciences journals over the last ten years (Tsigilis, Grouios, Tsorbatzoudis, & Koidou, 2010; Clarivate Analytics, 2018) makes the editorial work even harder. The reviewers are getting overburdened with reviews and ultimately are becoming even more focused on the higher-ranked journals. Eventually, it’s like playing the Champions League with a low-budget team, constantly canvassing the best players to play for your team, and just hoping for the lesser spread at the end. Therefore,

here we must honor and gratefully acknowledge all our peer reviewers who have helped us play the game at the highest level and continuously cut the spread year by year.

It actually seems like the IF is really the key factor in a life of a journal and its increment can solve a lot of problems. But, should we really be focused only on chasing that number? There are numerous ethical, and unethical, ways to increase the IF with the attraction of the highest quality papers and increasing the visibility of the journal being some of the ethical ones (Uzun, 2017). Publishing more reviews and meta-analyses (Eston, 2005) and expanding the journal scope to target a larger audience (Sieck, 2000) are also some of the ethical ways to boost ranking on the JCR list. In order to utilize all of the above-mentioned resources, an idea for this Supplement issue emerged. However, the ultimate goal was not, and it should not be, to necessarily increase the IF. That should, and hopefully will, be the secondary outcome of the project. The first goal was to elevate quality of *Kinesiology* by publishing top-level manuscripts that would attract larger audience to read the journal and eventually to publish their research in it. To see *Kinesiology* articles cited in books, presented at sports-related scientific and professional conferences, referenced in exercise guidelines, reviews, meta-analyses and position statements, used in classes for teaching students is the actual ultimate goal of the journal. That would be the confirmation of a successful (and trusted) journal and recognition of the journal’s contribution to science and practice. And all these things are not reflected in an IF as it only shows citations in other scientific journals (which are also playing in the Champions League) and only over a certain period of time. The journal’s most cited paper (Hardman, 2008) contributed extremely little to the journal’s IF, but obviously made quite an impact in later years (at least in other scientific articles). In a way, the latter has been more rewarding for us, editors, than seeing the IF going up a few tenths. Having students learn about science (Foster, et al., 2016) or about the physiological mechanisms behind new techniques such as the Talk Test (Creemers, Foster, Porcari, Cress, and de Koning, 2017) in their classes also shows that the journal is heading in the right direction. Therefore, seeing some of the articles appear on a slide at a big scientific or professional conference that we attend and finding one (more even better) in one of the exercise and sport science (kinesiology) books is the next “green star” (Foster, et al., 2016) we are desperately waiting for.

With this Supplement, which is based on invited articles from mostly younger and scientifically well-recognized authors, we believe we are working to

make *Kinesiology* a fundamentally stronger journal that gets at scientific “truth” regardless of what the momentary effect on the IF might be.

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