Classification of journals in the QUALIS System of CAPES - URGENT need of changing the criteria!
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Due to its concern about the future of Brazilian scientific journals after new criteria were adopted by the QUALIS system of CAPES (Brazilian Federal Agency for the Improvement of Higher Education), the Brazilian Medical Association (Associação Médica Brasileira - AMB) has held several meetings at its headquarters in São Paulo to discuss this matter. Editors of the main Brazilian medical journals, directors of the Brazilian Association of Scientific Editors (Associação Brasileira de Editores Científicos - ABEC), and coordinators of the areas Medicine II and Medicine III of CAPES exchanged information and came out with proposals aimed at improving the evaluation process of Brazilian scientific journals by the new QUALIS system of CAPES. The classification of the scientific production according to the QUALIS system will be one of the main items of the three-year evaluation of graduate programs. Since most scientific articles published in Brazilian journals are produced within graduate programs supported by CAPES, it was very important to fine tune the speech and make sure that all the parties involved speak the same language. The editors of scientific journals are afraid that the new criteria adopted by CAPES may create a subgroup of journals exclusively based on the ISI Impact Factor. The previous criterion recommended an impact factor of 1 as a cutoff point. Recently, some Brazilian journals have achieved this goal after putting a great load of effort into it. However, in addition to considering only the impact factor, the new criterion established much higher cutoff points. If this measure is adopted, Brazilian journals will be despised by graduate academic advisors and students - who are the main producers of science in Brazil - thus creating a vicious cycle within which Brazilian journals will hardly survive.

Professor João Pereira Leite spoke on behalf of CAPES. In addition to being the coordinator of the area Medicine II, he is also the current representative of the health area in the Technical Scientific Council, which is the main department of CAPES. During one of the meetings, professor Leite provided a detailed explanation about the criteria adopted for three-year evaluation and their impact on Brazilian graduate programs. He also explained that, in face of the evident improvement of the quality of graduate programs, it was necessary to increase the cutoff point or the separation point in order to better differentiate these programs and classify them in terms of their quality level. Based on data from the graduate programs - collected using the data collection system of CAPES - it was found that many programs had more than 50% (some of them even had 80%) of their scientific production published in journals classified at higher levels of the classification scale. On its turn, CAPES decided to create a larger number of levels with the purpose of reclassifying the Brazilian journals. A decreasing scale based on the impact factor has been suggested: A1, A2, B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, and C. In addition, CAPES also created an equivalence factor according to which the number of articles published in journals belonging to the lower levels of the scale would be equivalent to a smaller number of articles published in journals belonging to the higher levels of the classification scale. Therefore, for example, for a certain area, 2 articles B1 would be equivalent to 1.2 article A1; 1 article B1 + 1 article A2 would be equivalent to 1.4 article A1; 3 articles B2 would be equivalent to 1.2 article A1. According to professor Leite: “Such equivalence would bring benefits for journals with different qualification levels.” Professor Leite also informed that the new classification system was designed based on the median of the journals’ impact factor provided by the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) and calculated every year by the ISI Web of Knowledge. A list of journals including each area of CAPES was made to calculate the median. The median for each area was based on this list and on the respective impact factors; then, a new classification system ranging from A1 to C was created.

The editors reminded professor Leite that the three-year evaluation process of CAPES would cause a relative disagreement for the reclassification of the journals, since several Brazilian journals will have their impact factor increased or published for the first time during 2010, mainly those that have just been indexed in the ISI. In addition, these journals would have to wait for three years to change their classification in the new QUALIS! Another aspect that was questioned by the editors is related to the choice of the impact factor published by the JCR as the ONLY and universal index to assess the quality of the journals. There is a high standard deviation in the impact factors of different journals. Certainly, that is the reason why CAPES used the median of those indexes to analyze the scientific pro-
duction of graduate programs. Actually, according to this
criterion, some medical specialties, such as those related
to surgery, have their best journals with a lower impact
factor, which might result in a bias that could be extremely
unfavorable for them.

Both the editors and CAPES agree that valuing the
Brazilian journals is important for the Brazilian scientific
growth and development. With the purpose of keeping and
stimulating this virtuous cycle, it is necessary to promote
and foster the citation of articles published by Brazilian
authors, intensify the efforts of editors, reviewers and au-
thors to increase the quality of the articles and, on the other
hand, make sure that the governmental agencies, especially
CAPES and CNPq, provide support for the management
of the financial resources and qualitative classification of
the journals.

The results of these discussions were presented in sev-
eral meetings attended by editors, coordinators of graduate
programs and researchers, and new suggestions were made.
The ideas described below will be used as the conclusion of
this editorial and, at the same time, we hope that they serve
as an important tool to convince the agencies to change the
criteria of journal classification in the QUALIS system of
CAPES. Our suggestions are as follows:

• The qualitative analysis of the Brazilian journals
should be reassessed and it should not include only the
Impact Factor published by the JCR;

• The specific characteristics of each area of interest
or each specialty should be taken into consideration and
respected;

• The Brazilian publishing industry, in contrast with
what happens in other countries where it is financed by
private investors, is financially supported by public and
private universities and scientific associations;

• Brazilian journals need to receive more support and
stimuli, which may be provided as: financial remunera-
tion for editors, financial support for journals, greater visibility
for national journals abroad, more objective and encom-
passing criteria for the qualitative classification, and sup-
port based on the performance of each journal;

• Support for the internationalization of scientific
journals by fostering the professionalization of the editorial
process and promotion of the journals in other countries;

• Continuous update of the journal classification sys-
tem within the new QUALIS with no need to wait for the
three-year period of assessment;

• Participation of scientific associations (ABEC, AMB,
among others) in the decision-making process regarding
the QUALIS system of CAPES;

• Strong stimulation of citations directly in the source
of scientific production, that is, graduate programs (for
instance, recommending that graduate programs classified
as 6 or 7, in addition to being required to have a percent-
age of articles published in journals with high impact fac-
tor, should also have a percentage of articles published in
Brazilian journals. This measure includes both ends of the
scientific production, since young and future researchers
begin their careers publishing in national journals under
the supervision of experienced researchers.

In conclusion, to show its agreement with all these
measures and its concern with the consequences of the
new QUALIS of CAPES and other evaluation procedures
of journals, ABEC devoted three days to the forum of the
areas during its last National Meeting of Scientific Editors,
which was held in November 2009. During this meeting,
members of the staff of CAPES and editors of all the areas
of scientific knowledge held long discussions on this topic
and came up with the suggestion of the Forum of the Areas
Guidelines of the 12th National Meeting of Scientific Edi-
tors – 2009, which will be timely sent to all the Brazilian
sponsoring agencies, which should be done periodically
because this is a continuous process.

The following editors approved this editorial:

Adagmar Andriolo [Jornal Brasileiro de Patologia e Me-
dicina Laboratorial] Aécio Flávio Meireles Souza [Revista
GED] Alberto Queiroz Farias [Revista Arquivos de Gastro-
enterologia] Alfredo José Afonso Barbosa [Jornal Brasileiro
de Patologia e Medicina Laboratorial] Antonio Spina Fran-
cia Netto [Revista Arquivos de Neuro-Psiquiatria] Arnaldo
Jose Hernandez [Revista Brasileira de Medicina do Esporte]
Aroldo F. Camargos [Revista Femina] Benedito Barra-
vierra [Journal of Venomous Animals and Toxins including
Tropical Diseases] Bogdana Victoria Kadunc [Surgical &
Cosmetic Dermatology da Soc. Brasileira de Dermatologia]
Bruno Caramelli [Revista da Associação Médica Brasilei-
ra] Carlos Eduardo Aguilera Campos [Revista Brasilei-
ra de Medicina de Família e Comunidade] Carlos Brites
[Brazilian Journal of Infectious Diseases] Dejair Cai
tano do Nascimento [Hansenologia Internationalis] Domingo
M. Braile [Revista Brasileira de Cirurgia Cardiovascular]
Dov Charles Goldenberg [Revista Brasileira de Cirurgia
Plástica] Edmund Chada Baracat [Revista da Associação
Médica Brasileira] Edna T. Kimura [Arquivos Brasileiros de
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Radiologia Brasileira] Eduardo de Paula Vieira [Revista
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[Revista da Sociedade Brasileira de Clínica Médica] Ger-
aldo Pereira Jotz [Revista Brasileira de Cirurgia Cabeça e