

## Comments on Paper by Thomas et al: How to Evaluate “Quality of Publication”

Paulo Roberto Benchimol Barbosa

Hospital Universitário Pedro Ernesto - Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, RJ - Brazil

I read with interest the paper by Thomas et al on the evaluation of researchers and scientific publications<sup>1</sup>.

For some time I have seen discussions on the use of measures that evaluate the quality of scientific publications, as well as the validity of these measures in properly expressing such information<sup>2,3</sup>. It can be stated that the more people publish, the more people recognize the research done, and the greater the recognition, the higher the number of publications. I have described this phenomenon as the “Tostines effect,” in allusion to the famous tautology that attempts to explain the success of sales of a certain food product. It is a virtuous circle of scientific development. Measures of quality of publication influence this phenomenon.

As for the paper, I would like to make a few comments:

1. Objective measures of publication quality have limitations. Indeed, Thomson Reuters’ impact

factor (<http://isiknowledge.com/>) considers papers published in printed journals. There are journals that take months to print the paper from the acceptance stage. A paper that guides the performance of research can awaken high interest when published online. However, the gap existing up to printing can make the printed paper obsolete, with obvious repercussions on the impact factor.

2. Another aspect highlights the interest that certain articles arouse in the scientific community with minimal impact on publications. In a query to the database Scielo referring to the *Arquivos Brasileiros de Cardiologia*, between March/2004 and January 2006, the paper “Marfan’s syndrome: early and severe form in siblings” was the most downloaded, receiving 5,559 accesses<sup>4</sup>. However, it only received two quotes in journals, since its publication. It is, therefore, an article that sparked interest in the scientific community. How to evaluate the quality of this article? The design of an impact factor that takes into account both the printed quote and online access may express more accurately the quality of publication<sup>3</sup>.

### Keywords

Bibliometrics; journal impact factor; scientific and technical publications.

**Mailing address:** Paulo Roberto Benchimol Barbosa •

Rua Pompeu Loureiro, 36/702 - Copacabana - 22061-000 - Rio de Janeiro, RJ - Brazil

E-mail: pbarbosa@cardiol.br, benchimol@globo.com

Manuscript received March 10, 2011; revised manuscript received March 13, 2011; accepted on March 15, 2011.

### References

1. Thomaz PG, Assad RS, Moreira LF. Uso do Fator de Impacto e do Índice H para avaliar pesquisadores e publicações. *Arq Bras Cardiol*. 2011; 96(2):90-3.
2. Lainscak M. How to relevantly measure the relevance of published articles? *Int J Cardiol*. 2007;115(1):79-80.
3. Barbosa PR. Can we accurately measure the impact of published articles in modern Internet Era? *Int J Cardiol*. 2007;120(3):410.
4. Scielo: Library Collection. *Arquivos Brasileiros de Cardiologia*. Most visited issue. Initial date: Feb 2004; Final date: Jan 2006. [Cited 2011 Mar 10]. Available from: [http://scielo-log.bireme.br/scielolog/scielolog.php?script=sci\\_startart&pid=0066-782X&lng=en&nrm=iso&order=1&dti=20040201&dtf=20060131&app=scielo&server=www.scielo.br&access=1](http://scielo-log.bireme.br/scielolog/scielolog.php?script=sci_startart&pid=0066-782X&lng=en&nrm=iso&order=1&dti=20040201&dtf=20060131&app=scielo&server=www.scielo.br&access=1).

### Reply

See page 88.