

The National Scientific Policy and the Challenge for Journals, Editors and Researchers

A política científica nacional e o desafio para revistas, editores e pesquisadores

In the scientific environment there is no information in store. Once a study is over, the strongest desire of researchers is promote by means of publication of scientific articles their results worldwide, in order to consolidate their position as reference in the subject. Among the most organized research teams, which in Brazil typically belong to pos-graduation programs, there are many stimuli for this mentality to prevail, like governamental funds, bonuses, advance in career, besides maintenance of the pós-graduation program accreditation (1). For most of the participants of these groups who are mostly associated to universities, the scientific research is a priority and a systematic professional activity, in which time and resources are invested.

However, scientific journals and their readers also need to have articles written by fortuitous researchers from independent research groups, in general, connected with mainly assistance and/or teaching services. Those groups are encouraged to publish scientific articles to generally promote their institutions and their members. To develop medical knowledge, information produced this way is very important not only epidemiologically, revealing regional features many times toward public health policies but also clinically, producing data about new procedures and technologies.

Among BRICS developing countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), Brazil traditionally stands out by its scientific production quantitatively (number of published articles in indexed journals). Nevertheless, this is not very well valued qualitatively (impact of publications). Recently, national scientific policies have encouraged, by means of pressures in evaluation of pós-graduate programs, publication of scientific articles in journals of high impact factor with the objective of promoting research generating inovations and patents (2). This measure forced researchers involved in graduation programs to improve scientific quality of their studies, so as to publish them in international journals of adequate impact. We can say that quality of research developed in the country is now better; however, this improvement happened much before that of quality of national journals.

Scientific national journals are gradually getting better, together with improvement in the impact factor (3 to 6). High impact factor has been slow, but progressive, attracting little by little important articles conducted in pós-graduation centers. Improvement of national journals benefits not only researchers by having one more option of where to publish but also readers by accessing more precise scientific knowledge (7,8). Nevertheless, a price is paid for that, because desire for scientific quality obliges journals to refuse articles with design deficiencies (planning), conduction (data collection) or composition (writing). As studies carried out in well organized research centers have already adjusted to international scientific standards, the onus of national journals search for improvement lies on independent researchers, who are forced by scientific journals themselves to improve the quality of submissions in order to get the publication.

In this context and considering that national journals are trying to improve their image in the scientific environment, being obliged to select only well structured articles for publication, it is thus crucial that independent researchers improve in order to maintain their publishing potential. Most of the articles submitted this way is done by case reports which are important for the readers and although journals do not give them scientifically much credit, those articles are given credit for their clinical value of information (9). Unfortunately, we notice that progressively less original articles from independent researchers are being sent or accepted.

Yet, I believe that at this moment one of the challenges of editors is that of making external researchers for research centers, capable in order to do clinical prospective essays, teaching how to adequately choose the subject, design methodology, conduct data collection and structure the writing of the article. If CAPES (Coordinating Agency of University Level Personnel), governamental agency which rules and evaluates pós-graduation programs in Brazil, had encouraged its researchers to improve scientific standards, is left to scientific editors the task of explaining the mission and the vision of journals, besides encouraging improvement of independent researchers, in the attempt of preserving publication by this channel.

The tools of editors to accomplish that task are the editorials, in which is possible to express ideas and teaching; revision of articles with constructive criticism, teaching the authors how to improve the structure and the scientific writing and also the availability in organizing courses of competency in university, regional and national meetings.

Scientific editors generally have condition and interest in training authors. Some of the main scientific national meetings, like the Brazilian Congress of Ophthalmology and the Congress of the Brazilian Society of Ophthalmology, have symposiums for scientific journals to address those subjects. Nevertheless, what one notices is lack of manifestation and interest on behalf of the public interest, because independent researchers or potential authors who participate in those sessions are scarce. In my opinion it is necessary that fortuitous researchers get out of their “comfort zone” and start to invest their time and resources in science, seeking improvement and following the national scientific evolution.

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