

Already a long way... and a longer way ahead: our future challenges

Uma longa jornada até agora... E uma ainda mais longa adiante: nossos futuros desafios

Our journal, *Revista Brasileira de Terapia Intensiva* - RBTI, is now indexed in PubMed/MedLine. This achievement represents a critical step for the Brazilian-Portuguese-Latin American intensive care community. Certainly a well-deserved recognition of our quality and efforts in this crusade.

We do expect an increase in our submissions, coming not only from Brazil and Portugal but also from Latin America and other continents. RBTI is currently Latin America and Portugal's best structured critical care journal. Over the past few years, our journal has consistently improved. We now have a technically sound journal in both Portuguese and English with an excellent quality of written English, a modern electronic submission system (Manuscript Central) and a renovated website with many practical tools to help authors and readers. Since 2007, RBTI has been indexed in the *Scientific and Electronic Library Online* (SciELO), and the journal's quality has greatly improved, as demonstrated by our growing access numbers on the SciELO website. From January 2007 to August 2013, we had more than 3,052,831 article accesses, 1,129,554 of which were from January 2012 to now.⁽¹⁾ Since 2009, we have had 46,775 accesses in Spanish and 172,321 in English at SciELO,⁽²⁾ demonstrating our relevance to non-Portuguese-speaking readers.

Latin America needs a strong Latin American critical care journal to make our investigators' contributions available worldwide. The indexing of RBTI by MedLine will also help to provide Portuguese-speaking healthcare professionals with these high-quality scientific contributions.

However, MedLine indexing is not only a goal we have achieved but also a new and challenging horizon. We are now in a highly competitive world of scientific journals competing for quality research articles and impact factors. For Brazilian journals, the impact factor is of utmost importance. The majority of our scientific production is currently linked to graduate programs supported by the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES), the Brazilian federal agency responsible for the improvement of education in universities. CAPES has created Qualis, a system to assess the quality of all published papers produced by their graduate programs. Articles are rated according to the impact factor of the journal where they are published, and MedLine-indexed journals, even those without impact factors, are better rated than journals only indexed in SciELO. In the last triennial assessment, CAPES considered only the impact factor generated by the Journal Citation Report

(JCR), a product of the Thomson Reuters. In the 2013 evaluation, some of the CAPES boards will also take into account the SCImago Journal Rank (SJR), the impact factor generated by Scopus. By relying upon this sort of analysis based on impact factors, Qualis has created a vicious circle that is currently jeopardizing all Brazilian journals. As we do not receive high-quality submissions due to our low rankings, we cannot accrue the citations necessary for our impact factors to improve. We might not be strong enough to change these criteria alone, but our position against them has been clearly stated in recent publications^(3,4) and in an editorial signed by the editors of many Brazilian journals, including RBTI.⁽⁵⁾ We need to change this vicious cycle into a virtuous one that intensifies the efforts of editors, reviewers and authors to increase the quality of the articles, promoting and fostering the citation of articles published by Brazilian authors. Criticisms regarding the misuse of impact factors as a quality assessment to rank journals are not restricted to Brazilian researchers and editors. A recent initiative known as the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), initiated by the American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) together with a group of editors and publishers of scholarly journals, has pointed out the limitations of impact factor assessment and recognized the need to improve the methods by which the outputs of scientific research are evaluated.⁽⁶⁾ In the meantime, the Qualis status of RBTI will improve in their next evaluation cycle. RBTI has also been indexed in Scopus since December 2012, which will additionally provide us with an SJR impact factor. Next, we shall apply for Thomson Reuters indexation; hopefully, this application will yield us an additional JCR impact factor within three years. For example, in the Medicine CAPES boards, we will be ranked at least as a B2 and no longer as a B4.

This scenario represents the current challenging environment in which RBTI must succeed. We request that graduate academic advisors and students help us to change this vicious cycle into a virtuous one by submitting their high-quality research to RBTI. We, as the community of intensive care researchers, will have to decide if we want a strong intensive care journal in Latin America. If the answer is yes, we will need not only to submit high-quality papers locally but also to acknowledge their quality. We must promote the articles published in our journal, as we cannot expect other entities to recognize the quality our work if we, ourselves, do not endorse it. Therefore,

we hope that Brazilian, Portuguese and Latin American researchers will all consider our journal as a resource of articles during their literature review process.

There is no easy way to raise the profile or impact factor of a journal. Clearly, improving scientific quality is a necessary step. RBTI does not endorse practices such as excessive self citation or “citation-staking,” developed so that certain journals could publish articles cross-citing each other’s publications to raise both of their impact factors. In its 2013 JCR, Thomson Reuters imposed a penalty on 14 journals, including 4 important Brazilian journals, of suspension from the impact factor list due to this practice of staking. Thomson Reuters also red-flagged 52 other journals because of excessive self-citations. CAPES overreacted to this incident, first suspending the journals from CAPES’ evaluation system Qualis until their impact factors have been restored. Second, CAPES stated that any articles published in these 4 Brazilian journals from 2010 to 2012 will not be considered its October 2013 evaluation of graduate programs. This excessive punishment, thus, is directed not only at the journals but also at us, the authors and graduate programs.

The intensive care community of Brazil, Portugal and Latin America will have to decide our future actions now. As for us, we will seek indexation by Thomson Reuters. It took us many years of quality improvement efforts to attain MedLine indexation, and those authors who published their productions in RBTI are now rewarded with the indexing of their articles. In the upcoming months, all RBTI issues will be indexed back to 2006, which is further great news. Similar efforts are now needed to get improve our impact factor. We urge our contributors to help us in this new journey. RBTI needs to survive in this new world.

A final word of thanks. We have traversed this long road due to the efforts of our preceding and current editors, reviewers and editorial team. Without their help, we would not be facing this exciting new challenge. Additionally, we must dedicate words of reverence and respect toward those who are truly responsible for making a great journal: our authors. We are working hard to improve our peer review process to better meet your expectations, and we are counting on you on this new journey!

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