

## Impact factor and open access – a misconstrued association

We read with interest a recent letter by Tauro and Rao<sup>1</sup> that is based on three assumptions which are hard to comprehend.

The first assumption of the authors that ‘in the present times, rightly, there is an increased demand to publish research in open access journals’ is contradictory to the overwhelming demand to publish in journals with high impact factor, irrespective of the access policy of the journal. It is suggested to publish in journals with an impact factor for greater international visibility and impact<sup>2</sup>. In fact, the publication and processing charges in most open access journals with impact factor or even otherwise are so high that it is outside the reach of researchers from most parts of the world to publish in them.

The second assumption that ‘Now if all research work is published in the open access journals which are freely available, the impact factor of all research work would go sky high making this parameter absurd’, is an inappropriate and misconstrued result of the first assumption. Though the history of open access journals goes back to the later part of the 20th century, there are a limited number of open access journals with

citation index and impact factor. Even these select journals have not observed any steep rise in their impact factors over the years. On the other hand, many of the subscription-based/closed access/paid access journals continue to show a steady increase in journal impact factor despite the challenges posed by the open access journals in their respective fields. Even the well-established subscription-based journals with high impact factor that have adapted open access policy for quite some time now, have not witnessed any skyrocketing effect in their impact factors following the change in their access policies. To a certain extent, the number of times the articles are viewed or accessed may have an association with the free availability of the articles; however, the number of citations, that forms an essential criterion in calculation of journal impact factor, depends mostly on the quality of research work being published in the journal and not on the free availability of the articles in the journal.

Lastly, the third assumption that ‘to reexamine the value of the “impact factor” and develop criteria to evaluate scientists based on their abilities and enterprise and not on the “impact factor”’ is unclear too and probably based

on the above misconstrued assumptions. The journal impact factor is not meant to evaluate the worth of the scientists. It is just a measure of citations of a particular journal. Though impact factor may be considered as one of the forms/criteria of evaluation, it most certainly should not be the only criterion to evaluate a scientist. It is time to recognize that impact factor in fact refers to a journal’s impact and not author’s/researcher’s impact.

1. Tauro, P. and Rao, A. S., *Curr. Sci.*, 2014, **107**(9), 1367.
2. Menezes, R. G. *et al.*, *Curr. Sci.*, 2007, **93**(11), 1467.

TANUJ KANCHAN<sup>1,\*</sup>  
KEWAL KRISHAN<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Forensic Medicine,  
Kasturba Medical College  
(A Constituent College of Manipal  
University),*

*Mangalore 575 001, India*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Anthropology,  
Panjab University,*

*Sector-14,*

*Chandigarh 160 014, India*

*\*e-mail: tanuj.kanchan@manipal.edu*

## Ban on dissection and animal experimentation

The recent letter entitled ‘Why is “dissection” such a dirty word?’<sup>1</sup> has brought in sharp focus the cause for major concern to the higher education in India.

Following UGC’s ban on the dissection of rats and mice in colleges and universities<sup>2</sup>, there has been a massive fall in academic standards in life sciences, including veterinary sciences and incalculable damage to the quality of research being pursued in different branches of biological sciences across the country. The cascading effect of this short-sighted policy will only get worse with the passage of time. Indeed today we are producing students who have no ‘feel’ for animal sciences, and tomorrow we will have teachers who cannot inspire the excitement of science in next-generation

biology students. So the question is who is really profiting from the skewed policy? The needle of suspicion points at the multinational pharma companies, who have vested interest in degrading the potential of Indian researchers. The policy has uncanny resemblance with the strategy of the British Raj to destroy the flourishing indigenous salt industry<sup>3</sup>.

So, are we being naïve in implementing policies, which in the garb of love for animals, are in fact targeted at hitting our self-reliance and economic interests? It is heartening to note that the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India is planning to revisit the ban on animal dissection and animal experimentation at the under-

graduate level and restrictions at the postgraduate level<sup>4</sup>.

1. Subhedar, N. K. *Curr. Sci.*, 2015, **108**, 1577–1578.
2. <http://www.mgdcaua.org/docs/ugcletter-zoology.pdf>
3. [http://www.epw.in/system/files/pdf/1951\\_3/9/we\\_are\\_now\\_selfsufficient\\_in\\_salt.pdf](http://www.epw.in/system/files/pdf/1951_3/9/we_are_now_selfsufficient_in_salt.pdf)
4. [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-05-01/news/61723751\\_1\\_animal-dissection-animal-experimentation-environment-ministry](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-05-01/news/61723751_1_animal-dissection-animal-experimentation-environment-ministry)

DOYIL T. VENGAYIL

*Department of Science and Technology,  
Technology Bhavan, New Mehrauli Road,  
New Delhi 110 016, India  
e-mail: doylitv@nic.in*