

## Flaws in UGC assessment of recognition of journals

The UGC has taken into account certain criteria for recognition of journals. The UGC-approved list of journals consists of: (i) journals indexed in WoS (Science Citation Index, Social Science Citation Index and Arts and Humanities Citation Index); (ii) journals indexed in Scopus; (iii) journals indexed in Indian Citation Index; (iv) journals recommended by the Members of UGC Standing Committee and Language Committee(s), and (v) journals recommended by the universities (after de-duplication). Out of these, the last two criteria have several flaws, i.e. it is not clear what the UGC standing committee constitutes and how many members are there in this committee and whether they encompass all disciplines/branches. Similarly, journal recommendation by universities also has a flaw. There are a number of universities which are private and have different priorities and programmes that are market-driven. Even in the public universities, the focus

has shifted to fashionable research areas and there are possibilities of bias when they choose a particular journal for recognition, particularly when it comes to traditional subjects or branches of study. Many societies which are running for more than four decades have a journal published by them. With great difficulties of funding and financial constraints, they are bringing out journals for such a long time. These societies and the journals that they publish may be subject-area specific and hence there is every chance to miss or ignore by 'universities recommending a journal'. For example, the journal *Kavaka* – a journal of mycology started by the eminent mycologist of international repute C. V. Subramanian, who once held the position of President of International Mycological Association and recipient of several awards including INSA and who personally looked after this journal in various capacities including editor for several years – has been dere-

cognized in 2018. This journal publishes only articles related to fungi. How many universities deal with fungal research in India that are also going to recommend a journal to either recognize or derecognize? Whereas a broad titled journal like *Journal of Science and Engineering*, which could be a predatory journal, could very well pass through these 'universities recommending a journal' clause as several branches can fit into it. In other words, an otherwise predatory journal in fact becomes more accepted. Hence UGC may have a re-look into the criteria adopted to recognize or derecognize a journal.

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## On chaining the epigenetics blocks

To disentangle the complexities surrounding the genome, advanced technologies in epigenetics are indeed necessary. Epigenetics largely affects the way in which genes are read by the cells and whether the cells should produce appropriate proteins. Epigenetics is related to four key characteristics: (i) controlling ability of the genes, (ii) existence anywhere in the DNA, (iii) harnessing facility to derive unique features and (iv) reversibility. Epigenetics revolution can potentially enrich our understanding about the behaviour and phenotypical structure of life<sup>1</sup>. It is also important to develop comprehensiveness about why and how life inherits specific traits, advance diseases, mature ages and evolve as a species<sup>2</sup>.

Blockchain has recently emerged as a new cryptographic technology that can leverage transparency, immutability and auditability to the users through the decentralized consensus-based architecture<sup>3</sup>. Transactions in terms of blocks are first broadcast to the blockchain network and later get added in the form of blocks

when a miner successfully mines than along with other necessary details such as timestamp, nonce<sup>4</sup>.

The idea behind chaining of epigenetic information can be useful to develop an analytics-based predictive mindset of medical caregivers and the research community. DNA methylation process liable for a particular disease or change in patients' body can be stored as a block in the blockchain, which can be correlated with the existing set of blocks containing vast amount of related information to help take accurate decisions about curing the disease.

Cost-effective, non-invasive smart DNA methylation kits can be used to record epigenetic information, which can be further analysed to screen the whole epigenetic dataset and find the best match rate. Thus, more advanced targeted drug therapy could be provided to the users, while incentivizing them per accurate match result. Such conceptual correspondence would be helpful to open up a new domain of research and biological epigenetic knowledge harnessing,

by combining epigenetics and blockchain technology.

1. Carey, N., *The Epigenetics Revolution – How Modern Biology is Rewriting our Understanding of Genetics, Disease, and Inheritance*, Columbia University Press, 2013.
2. Ennis, C., *Introducing Epigenetics: A Graphic Guide*, Icon Books Publishing, 2017.
3. Heaven, D., *Nature*, 2019, **566**, 141–142.
4. Maxmen, A., *Nature*, 2018, **555**, 293–294.

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