Impact of the top three exclusive medical journals of India

It is indeed encouraging to note that the worldwide acknowledged Thomson Scientific Impact Factor (IF) of two exclusive medical journals of India has touched the magic figure of 1.000, for the first time ever[1]. In fact, the *Indian Journal of Medical Research* (*IJMR*) with an IF of 1.224 has topped the list of 45 Indian scientific journals covered by the 2006 Journal Citation Reports, Science Edition[1]. The *National Medical Journal of India* (*NMJI*) is not far behind[1], with an IF of 1.000. This is a decent progress since 2001, when *NMJI* stood at 0.617, after constantly wobbling around 0.600 for five consecutive years.

An IF of 1.000 and above means that *NMJI* and *IJMR* have now entered the mainstream level of 'admirable' medical journals, in terms of their articles being cited by medical science professionals worldwide. Considering the exclusive medical journals of India indexed by Thomson Scientific, the foremost competitors are *IJMR*, *NMJI* and *Neurology India*.

In India, hundreds of association-level and institute-level local biomedical journals have mushroomed in the recent past[2]. These journals have indeed formed an easy gateway to beautify one's curriculum-vitae for the purpose of academic promotions. No doubt, science does not exist until it is published[3], but 'quality' science exists in journals with a proven 'impact' on the scientific community. To enhance the international visibility and impact of their research, journals with an IF should be the final destination of the Indian medical community.

1. Journal Citation Reports 2006, Science Edition (CD ROM), Thomson Scientific, Philadelphia, 2007.
2. Sharma, O. P., *Curr. Sci.*, 2007, **93**, 5.
3. Rennie, D., *Lancet* (*Suppl. II*), 1998, **352**, 18–22.

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Tiger farms – How are they justifiable?

In China, tigers in farms number around 4000, while in the wild they are less than 1500, encompassing all the so-called sub species – a highly disappointing statistic so to say. The animals mainly keep dwindling in the wild, because of poaching and lack of habitat protection. Poaching spurs on a brisk illegal trade in biomaterials of the tiger, which have been used in traditional medicine for centuries. Legalizing the trade and commercializing the activity was the main reason for the growth of tiger farms.

Naturally many conservationists all over the world have raised a hue and cry against the practice of farming the tiger. The recent meeting of CITES, held at the Netherlands, had opposed the Chinese move of tiger farming. The main concerns were about the dwindling stock of tigers in the wild and over-crowding in the farms which prompts them to oppose the farms. Using its body parts in traditional Chinese medicine is also not acceptable.

However, the practice should not appear to be so hideous, as allopathic medicine which has been adopted the world over, also permits the use of animal derivatives in many cases. Moreover, conservation ultimately implies the wise use of replenishable resources for the benefit of mankind. The phrases, 'wise use' and 'benefit of mankind' are both relative concepts, and the Chinese believe in the fecundity of tiger body parts to cure illnesses, no matter whether the belief is scientific or not. Therefore in deference to a long-established tradition, it is desirable that we concede to their right to use tiger parts in therapeutic treatment, perhaps as their own version of bioprospecting. Apart from this the Chinese government itself is contemplating action for ascertaining the scientific value of the traditional Chinese medicine, which uses tiger parts as an ingredient, with a view to reviving it on a more authentic basis.

However, there is a hitch. The present scenario in China is such that, despite best efforts, long-term survival of the species in the wild is not ensured. A strict policy of surveillance and implementation of stringent laws should be able to check poaching; techniques like gene tagging can be resorted to in order to distinguish body parts from the wild and those from the farms. This way, a turn around can be achieved in the wild.

Thus China and other South East Asian countries must intensify their efforts to conserve the tiger population in the wild, even while allowing tiger farms to be maintained in the country. There is nothing objectionable in tiger farms per se, provided they are maintained in strict compliance with welfare measures. The authorities ought to initiate bold action in this regard. India too can follow China's example to an extent, establishing breeding centers for reintroduction purposes, and not farms with commercial motives and methods, unless the scientific potency of the tiger parts as medicine is proved.

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