Editorial gatekeeping in the US and UK clinical medicine journals

Scientific journals are the main source for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. The editorial boards of the journals disseminate their professional profile and control the standard of these journals. The members of the editorial and advisory boards of the journals are considered the gatekeepers of the journals[1]. As a result, information-screening activity of journal editorial boards is significant for satisfactory operation of the stratified system of science[2].

The present correspondence provides the national distribution of the editorial board members of 878 clinical medicine journals published from the US and the UK during the year 2008–09. The data for this study has been collected from ISI Web of Knowledge: *Current Contents: Clinical Medicine* available at http://www.thomsonscientific.com/[3]. The data were compiled by country-wise counting and pooling of the editorial board members.

The total number of journals in the field of clinical medicine as reflected by *Current Contents: Clinical Medicine* is 1450, of which 1068 are published from the US and the UK. Of these 1068 journals, 190 journals did not provide information about the editorial board due to various reasons. For instance, in some cases, only the names of the editorial board members were mentioned without the country to which these members belonged. In other cases, information about the editorial boards was not available on the journal website. In a few cases, journals mentioned that submissions were received only by invitation. Excluding all such cases, we have 878 journals from the US and the UK for which we examined the membership of the editorial boards.

Table 1. Ranking of countries in editorial boards of clinical medicine journals

Rank	Country	No. of Editorial board members
1	USA	8694
2	UK	2010
3	Germany	958
4	Canada	898
5	Japan	834
6	Italy	808
7	Australia	759
8	France	664
9	Netherlands	586
10	Switzerland	429
11	Sweden	354
12	Spain	321
13	Belgium	295
14	Finland	265
15	Israel	226
16	Brazil	216
17	Austria	214
18	China	204
19	Denmark	189
20	India	162
21	Greece	138
22	Korea	123
23	Norway	113
24	South Africa	110
25	New Zealand	110
26	Argentina	89

Table 1 provides the distribution of the editorial board members in the selected 878 journals for the year 2008–09. The distribution of editorial board members of various countries is uneven, like the distribution of scientific output. The membership is dominated by developed countries. Of the 26 countries listed in Table 1, 20 countries belonged to developed countries including the USA and the UK and the rest six countries (Argentina, Brazil, China, India, South Africa and South Korea) belong to developing countries. India ranked at 20 and the ranking is similar to the ranking of editorial board members for science[4] and chemistry[1]. This indicates that India ranks low in the list of the editorial board members in international journals in clinical medicine.

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Drug discovery from marine resources

Once, British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace was impressed by the beauty of Taiwan and he wrote, 'Among recent continental islands there is probably none that surpasses in interest and instructiveness the Chinese island named by the Portuguese "Formosa"'[1]. Taiwan has a population of 23 million and over the past few decades, this small island has evolved from agricultural backwater into a global technological giant. Now Taiwan aims to repeat the innovative success and global standing by revolutionizing drug discovery from marine organisms.

Taiwan is situated at the northern fringe of Indo-Pacific archipelagos, an area of high biodiversity location on earth. This small island is in the intersection zone of the Eastern China Sea, the Southern China Sea as well as the Philippines Sea with unique characteristics of 'ectone' that offers high degrees of species richness. High degrees of diversity of habitats in Taiwan include sandy beach, rocky shoreline, lagoons, mangroves along coastal areas, delta area, shallow waters in Taiwan Strait and deep water along the eastern coast. This island also offers a total of 1,600 km coastal line with wide varieties of habitats. All these factors contribute to a total of 2,500+ species of marine fish (about 1/10 of the world fish species), 300+ species of corals, 600+ species of marine algae, 2,500+ species of molluscs, 350+ species of crabs, 400+ species of shrimp and 150+ species of echinoderms[2]. This biodiversity of animals and algae offers many marine natural compounds for use in future drug candidate development and scientists of Taiwan are working towards this area.

The scientists at National Sun Yat-sen University (NSYU), National Taiwan

University (NTU) and Taipei Medical University (TMU) carried out these studies. Cytotoxic dolabellane diterpenes and terpenoids are isolated from formosan soft corals[3–5], furan derivatives and sesquiterpenoids from sponges[6,7], and bioactive compounds from algae[8,9]. Among these identified compounds, the toxicity property of some has been investigated in various cancer cell lines. We have worked towards identifying bioactive compounds from corals and sponges around Taiwan. New steroids from the formosan soft coral were also isolated and its anti-inflammatory property has been investigated[10]. Another compound lemnalol was isolated from formosan soft coral *Lemnalia cervicorni*. Our team found that lemnalol has anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties[11]. All these bioactive compounds are ready for any further clinical trial to establish their potential use as drugs against disease. The Government of Taiwan has formulated a strategy to coordinate clinical trials. Government-funding agencies (such as National Science Council and National Health Research Institute) are implementing a strategy to coordinate national policy to synergize the efforts of clinical trials in order to turn them into possible medical use.

India also has more than 8000 km of coastline and possesses an exclusive economic zone of over 2 million km^2 of the oceans. Oceans adjacent to India also offer abundant resources for drug candidate molecules which remains largely unexplored. Several research institutes like National Institute of Oceanography, Goa; Marine Aquarium and Research Centre, Digha; CSIR Madras Campus as well as IIT, Chennai and IIT, Mumbai are located near the coastline. Several universities like Vidyasagar University, Midnapore; Utkal University, Bhubaneswar; Andhra University, Visakhapatnam; Anna University, Chennai; Cochin University, Cochin; Goa University, Goa; Mumbai University, Mumbai, are also located along the coast and are aiming to carry out marine biotechnology projects. Therefore, these institutes and universities should initiate drug discovery projects. Development of drugs is particularly challenging because of diversity of marine aquatic species. The Government of India and related agencies should promote, encourage and support these projects to discover the huge amount of unexplored drug candidate molecules from the oceans.

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The earliest attempt for a national bibliography on S&T

Scientific publication seems to provide the best available basis for measuring the scientific activities of a country. In India, the need for a bibliographical periodical covering all publications on science and technology (S&T) has been felt for a long time due to the coverage of Indian literature on S&T being inadequate and also delayed in the international abstracting periodicals. B. S. Kesavan, the first Librarian of the National Library, Calcutta took initiatives to publish *Indian National Bibliography* from 1958 for bibliographical control of books and other publications produced in the country. After joining the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre (Insdoc, now National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources), New Delhi as first Director in the early 1960s, Kesavan decided to bring out another publication of a similar nature – an abstracting periodical covering Indian contributions on all branches of S&T appearing as research papers, correspondences, conference papers, reports, patents, standards, etc. Accordingly, Insdoc started a monthly abstracting periodical under the title *Indian Science Abstracts* (ISA) from January 1965.

However, this was not the first attempt to publish a bibliography covering the entire S&T literature of the country. Earlier, before the independence of the country in the mid-thirties, one of the premier science academies of the country made the first successful attempt to produce such a bibliography. The National Institute of Sciences of India, Calcutta (NISI, now Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi) was formally inaugurated at the University of Calcutta on 7 January 1935 and started functioning with its headquarters at the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1 Park Street, Calcutta. The NISI, within a month of its existence, decided[1] to publish an annual bibliography under the title 'Indian Science Abstracts' with subtitle 'being an annotated bibliography of science in India'. It included abstracts of all papers on S&T published in India or abroad on work done in India or based on Indian materials and papers dealing with problems specifically related to India.

The bibliography was published annually in two parts and abstracts were arranged tentatively under nine subject headings. To ensure continuity under each heading and to facilitate reference,