

THE QUEST FOR INDEXING A JOURNAL

Received: Jan. 18, 2021

Accepted: Jan. 20, 2021

Farrokh Habibzadeh^{1*} <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5360-2900>

¹Research and Development Headquarters, Petroleum Industry Health Organization, Shiraz, Iran



*Corresponding author:

Farrokh Habibzadeh, MD, Past President, World Association of Medical Editors (WAME); Editorial Consultant, The Lancet; Founder and former Editor, The International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (The IJOEM); Managing Director, Research and Development Headquarters, Petroleum Industry Health Organization (PIHO), Iran.

Twitter handle: @FHabibzadeh; **E-mail:** farrokh.habibzadeh@gmail.com

Abstract

Hearing about the selection of one's journal by a reputable indexing system pleases every editor. Journals with an international editorial members selected from prolific researchers have a higher chance of being selected by a prestigious indexing system. Geographic distribution of authors' affiliations is another important factor. Considering a minimum of internationally acceptable editorial standards would also influence the decision of the indexing systems to select a journal—publishing few quality articles is much better than publishing a bunch of poorly designed badly reported ones. The key to success is having a group of dedicated staff with good communication skills.

Keywords: Periodicals as topic, Journalism, Bibliographies as topic, Ethics, Publishing, Medicine

How to cite: Habibzadeh F. The quest for indexing a journal. Cent Asian J Med Hypotheses Ethics 2020;1(2):142–145. <https://doi.org/10.47316/cajmhe.2020.1.2.07>

Any editor would be delighted to learn that the journal he or she is affiliated with has been selected for indexing in any of the prestigious indexing systems such as MEDLINE, Scopus, and EMBASE, to name a few. Many editors (mostly of small journals) are keen to find avenues to gain acceptance by reputable indexing systems because its immediate effect is a significant increase in the journal visibility and the consequential increase in the number of submissions, which leaves more choices for the editor. In early years of my career as an Assistant Editor, that was one of my major objectives too until I participated for the first time in an international forum for editors—the Fourth International Congress on Peer Review held in September 2001 in Barcelona, Spain. During the congress and a pre-congress workshop on editorship craft, I repeatedly asked about secrets of journals that had succeeded in

the quest of indexing. It took two days for me to realize that there was no secret.

You just need to do your job correctly; the indexing systems will do theirs. Just try to publish a quality journal. The indexing systems will find your journal and select the contents for indexing. Indexing of the journal should not be an objective; it is a byproduct of your quality work—a sign reflecting the quality and competency of the editorial team.

Although the journal referees examining a journal evaluate it individually, there are several factors that would reflect the quality of the journal. Taking into account these factors would increase the chances of a journal being selected by a reputable indexing system. I considered these factors for managing The International

Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (The IJOEM), the journal I founded in 2010 in Iran (Fig. 1) [1], and they worked. The journal was selected for indexing in MEDLINE, Scopus, EMBASE, and many other indexing systems within the first three years of its activity [2]. All of them accepted to back-index all the journal contents from its very first issue published in January 2010, a success achieved by only a few journals in the region. The journal had also a high visibility; its website received one hit every 5 seconds. Herein, I am going to describe how we did it.

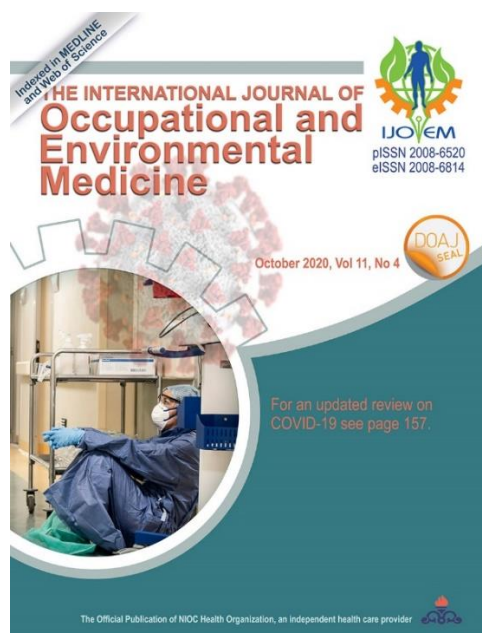
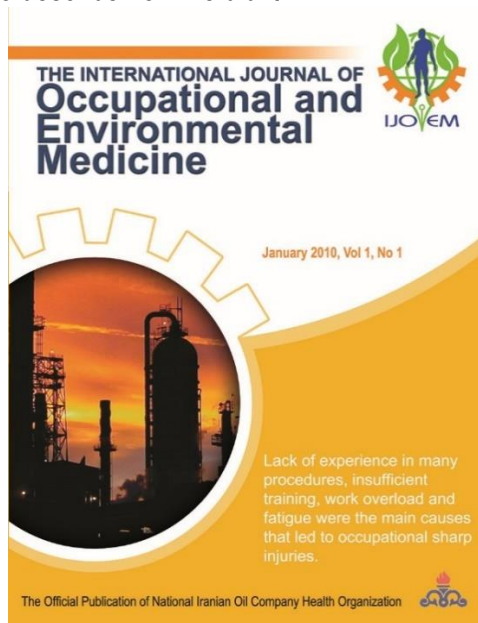


Fig. 1 Cover images of the inaugural and latest issues of the The International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (The IJOEM)

In the very first days, I contacted many erudite scholars in the field and could fortunately come to an agreement with some of them from various parts of the world to work

with us as Editorial Board members. There were just a few Iranians on the Board. Each member was a prolific scientist in his research field and could potentially help us with collecting submissions from their universities or research centers. This in turn, helped us to fulfill the second important criterion for being accepted by a reputable indexing system—publishing articles from most parts of the world, not just a specific region or country.

In the first months, when the journal was not yet recognized by any scientific bodies, the number of submissions was not even enough to compile a single issue of the journal. We decided to publish narrative review articles solicited from researchers in the field. We usually contacted them in person and invited them to write the review. In return, we promised that their work will receive complete attention with a quality artwork design, graphs, language editing, etc. We published just a few original articles selected with high scrutiny based on their scientific merits and quality of methods used. Many authors were indeed unable to comply with the standards set. Often, we asked them to provide their raw data set so that we could help them with data analyses, and presentation of results. We also helped them with language editing to find their voice. And, all were provided for free. These pre-peer-review edits significantly increased the likelihood the manuscript surviving the peer review.

To compensate for the few original articles we published, which was against the rules set by the national committee of medical journals in Iran, we used to publish some fillers—the calendar of events, images in medicine, etc. Publishing just a few good articles gave us the opportunity to be more selective. On the other hand, concentrating on just a few articles enabled us to maintain the minimum levels of internationally acceptable editorial standards.

Another important factor is to set a standard set up for the journal. The journal page layout including its fonts, color themes, sections, journal website design, etc, should not vary from issue to issue. Large variance reflects instability of the publishing system. It is very important for an indexing system that the journal has smooth and stable publishing routines. And, perhaps, that is why one of the important factors taken into account by some of the indexing systems is on-time publication of a journal. A delay in publication would indicate ineffective management of the journal. In such a circumstance, the indexing systems would usually rather wait and watch the progress of the journal for a longer period.

I believe the sequence of applying for these indexing systems is also important. Some of these systems are in fact not indexing services [3]; they are repositories (e.g., PubMed Central) or information aggregators (e.g., EBSCO). You cannot reapply for most of the indexing systems for a certain period, say 2–4 years, if your application is rejected. Therefore, you should not apply unless you are almost sure that your journal meets the minimum required criteria. I would go first for EBSCO and PubMed Central. They are easier to get in. Then, I would go for EMBASE and databases of Clarivate Analytics (formerly known as the Institute for Scientific Information [ISI]). MEDLINE should be the last indexing system to try as it has the most stringent selection criteria among all the indexing systems, to the best of my knowledge [2].

REFERENCES

1. Habibzadeh F. Does the world need a new journal? *Int J Occup Environ Med* 2010;1(1):ii.
2. Habibzadeh F. Inclusion of the IJOEM in MEDLINE (Index Medicus). *Int J Occup Environ Med* 2013;4(1):1.
3. Gasparyan AY, Kitas GD. PubMed Central archiving: a major milestone for a scholarly journal. *Mediterr J Rheumatol* 2020;31(1):3–5.
4. Habibzadeh F. The last note. *Int J Occup Environ Med* 2020;11(4):155–156.
5. Habibzadeh F. Tenth anniversary of The IJOEM. *Int J Occup Environ Med* 2020;11(1):1–2.

All these cannot be possible without a good editorial team. Our achievements in The IJOEM could have not been possible without the painstaking efforts made by our two enthusiastic editors—Dr. Mahboobeh Yadollahie, the Deputy Editor, and Ms. Ashraf Simi, the Executive Editor of the journal (both founding members) [4]. I have taught them the basic concepts of journalism and editorship craft; thus, we could communicate effectively. Although all of us were part-time editors, I believe we did a great job [5]. And almost all were done by considering the above-mentioned strategy.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None to declare

ЖУРНАЛДЫ ИНДЕКСТЕУ ПРОЦЕСІ

Түйіндеме

Кез-келген редактор журналының беделді индекстеу жүйесі арқылы таңдалғанын естігенде қуанады. Мүшелері ең беделді зерттеушілердің арасынан таңдалған, халықаралық редакторлық алқасы бар журналдардың беделді индекстеу жүйесіне ену мүмкіндігі жоғары. Тағы бір маңызды фактор - жарияланған авторлардың географиялық таралуы. Халықаралық редакторлық стандарттардың талап етілетін минимумын ескеру - индекстеу жүйелерінің журналды таңдау шешіміне әсер ететін тағы бір фактор: сапалы мақалалардың аз санын шығару нашар жобаланған және нашар жазылған мақалалардың көп мөлшерін шығарғаннан гөрі әлдеқайда жақсы. Табысқа жетудің кілті - коммуникативті дағдылары жоғары, өз ісіне берілген қызметкерлер тобының болуы.

Түйін сөздер: тақырып ретіндегі мерзімді басылымдар, журналистика, библиография тақырып ретінде, этика, баспа ісі, медицина

Дәйексөз үшін: Хабибзаде Ф. Журналды индекстеу процесі. Медициналық гипотеза мен этиканың Орта Азиялық журналы. 2020; 1(2): 142-145. <https://doi.org/10.47316/cajmhe.2020.1.2.07>

ПРОЦЕСС ИНДЕКСИРОВАНИЯ ЖУРНАЛА

Резюме

Каждому редактору приятно слышать, о том, что его журнал выбран авторитетной системой индексации. Журналы с международной редакционной коллегией, члены которой отобраны из наиболее авторитетных исследователей, имеют больше шансов попасть в престижную систему индексации. Еще одним важным фактором является географическое распределение публикуемых авторов. Принятие во внимание необходимого минимума международных редакционных стандартов является еще одним фактором, влияющим на решение систем индексации о выборе журнала: публикация небольшого количества качественных статей намного лучше, чем публикация большого числа плохо оформленных и плохо проработанных статей. Ключом к успеху является наличие группы преданных своему делу сотрудников с развитыми коммуникативными навыками.

Ключевые слова: периодические издания как тема, журналистика, библиографии как тема, этика, издательское дело, медицина

Для цитирования: Хабибзаде Ф. Процесс индексирования журнала. Центральноазиатский журнал медицинских гипотез и этики. 2020; 1(2): 142-145. <https://doi.org/10.47316/cajmhe.2020.1.2.07>