

## Citing Wikipedia and encyclopedias

A member of the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) recently asked on the association's listserver [1] whether any journals allowed citations to Wikipedia. There were no replies from medical editors who said they did allow such citations in their journals. Matt Hodgkinson from BioMed Central pointed to articles in Wikipedia which explain that citation to Wikipedia in research papers is not acceptable because Wikipedia is not considered to be a credible source [2-4]. Researchers should instead read and refer to the original sources cited in the Wikipedia article. One article in Wikipedia about researching with Wikipedia [2] advises that you should be "wary of any one single source (in any medium—web, print, television or radio), or of multiple works that derive from a single source" and that "Wikipedia, along with most encyclopedias, is unacceptable as a major source for a research paper. Other encyclopedias, such as *Encyclopædia Britannica*, have notable authors working for them and may be cited as a secondary source in most cases. For example, Cornell University has a guide [5] on how to cite encyclopedias." This website also has a useful section titled "Citing materials from online sources".

*TWS* allows citation to Wikipedia in opinion pieces for general lay definitions but citation of original sources is preferable.

### References:

1. <http://www.wame.org>
2. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Academic\\_use](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Academic_use)
3. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Researching\\_with\\_Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Researching_with_Wikipedia)
4. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citing\\_Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citing_Wikipedia)
5. [http://www.library.cornell.edu/newhelp/res\\_strategy/citing/apa.html](http://www.library.cornell.edu/newhelp/res_strategy/citing/apa.html)

## Article metrics: The death knell of the impact factor and journals?

The impact factor of a journal is driven by a few highly cited articles [1]. One of the problems therefore with assessing a scientist for job promotion based on the number of articles he has published in high impact factor journals is that what is being assessed is the citation rates of certain articles in the journal rather than the quality of the scientist's paper itself.

The Public Library of Science recently developed a system of 'article level metrics' which are attached to individual articles. Juliet Walker, one of its board members, explains [2] the system by reference to the metrics attached to the most popular article ever published in *PLoS Medicine*:

## Biomedical publishing shorts

'Why most published research findings are false' by John Ioannidis. A tab, 'metrics', at the top of the article shows not only how many times the article has been cited and in which databases and even blogs but also how many times the article has been viewed, and how many times it has been downloaded. Thus the interest a paper has created among readers who might not be writing papers and citing is also measured. This is a step closer to measuring the influence a piece of research has on the community. *PLoS* is keen to extend the system to mentions of papers in parliament and official reports. Juliet believes that because articles can be published quickly on databases, the metrics will dispense with the need for journals as a tool in assessing scientists, heralding the death knell of journals.

### References:

6. Callaham M, Wears RL, Weber E. Journal Prestige, Publication Bias, and Other Characteristics Associated With Citation of Published Studies in Peer-Reviewed Journals. *JAMA*. 2002;287:2847-2850.
7. <http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2009/11/02/>

[richard-smith-the-beginning-of-the-end-for-impact-factors-and-journals/](http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2009/11/02/richard-smith-the-beginning-of-the-end-for-impact-factors-and-journals/)

## Peer review: Pressure to publish reviews

A group of 14 stem cell researchers have written an open letter to the major scientific journals complaining that important research in their field is not being published whereas papers that hardly advance knowledge in the field are being published. They say that this is because a clique of rival researchers review the papers and either reject them or delay publication by asking for unnecessary experiments to be done so that they can publish their work first. A vast amount of public funding is channelled into stem cell research and continued funding depends on researchers publishing their findings in scientific journals. It is suggested that competition between rival groups for grants engenders unscrupulous behavior. Competition between journals is another element which the group believes leaves editors depending on favoured reviewers who in turn submit their own papers to the journal. Accordingly editors dare not offend these reviewers for fear of losing their papers to a rival journal.

The solution proposed by the open letter is that the reviews leading to a paper's publication should be published as supplementary material online along with the paper. Spokespeople for both *Nature* and *Science* deny the allegations but do not appear inclined to publish reviews.

**Source:** Ghosh P. Journal stem cell work 'blocked'. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8490291.stm>



EMWA European Medical Writers Association

Register for the 30<sup>th</sup> EMWA Conference in Lisbon on <http://www.emwa.org/Lisbon-2010.html>