Embracing the principles of the San Francisco Declaration of Research Assessment: Robert Balaban’s Editorial

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Early career scientists today face many obstacles in their effort to achieve an independent career, including stiff competition for grant funding and jobs. Many of these hurdles reappear throughout one’s scientific career; thus, for example, achieving and maintaining external funding for one’s research is a widely used criterion in evaluations for academic advancement. One widely perceived barrier to scientific success and career advancement is the necessity of having recent publications in “high impact” journals. Most of us have had personal experiences with grant review panels, academic search committees, and academic promotion committees in which the evaluation of scientific productivity appears to be reduced to journal impact-factor arithmetic.

There is a growing realization in the scientific community that the use of the journal impact factor as an evaluation criterion has harmful effects on the way science is practiced. As Dr. Andersen pointed out in his editorial (Andersen, 2008), one of the major problems is that the use of journal impact factor as a criterion for the evaluation of scientific publications appears to have been reduced to journal impact-factor arithmetic. This practice has severe consequences for the evaluation process, as it results in a community in which the quantity of the research is the prime criterion of scientific merit. As Marc Kirschner so eloquently put it, “The scientific community must create leadership with the courage and independence to take control of the structure of its training, the peer review of its journals, the organization of grant review panels, and the overall priorities that are set” (Kirschner, 2013).

REFERENCES

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