



Letter to the Editor

Have we made any progress? A comment on the “Scarcity of publications from the Arab countries in one of the Q1 orthopedic journals, is it us or the journal?”

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Dear Sir,

Scientific publications are considered as the academic credit for researchers and their institutions. Authors are encouraged to publish in high ranking journals, to gain recognition, citations, exposure, and improve their ranking and classifications. In a previous article,^[1] we evaluated the prevalence contributions from authors affiliated with Arabic institutions to the high ranking, Q1 multidisciplinary orthopedic and trauma journal, “The Bone and Joint Journal (BJJ).” We thought of taking another glance at the published articles in BJJ in the period following our previous investigation, to check if any progress has been made by Arabic authors to the journal.

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WHAT HAS CHANGED?

The Journal's impact factor increased from 4.301 (at the time of the original study) to 5.082, currently. Authors' contribution from Arabic institutions was 0.5% (six articles out of 1161) over 5 years (till December 2018), resulting in a publication rate of 1.2 articles/year. Interestingly, contributions increased over the past 2½ years (from January 2019 till now) to 0.8% (seven articles out of a total of 846 articles), resulting in a publication rate of 2.8 articles/year. However, comparing the results obtained in the original study,^[1] with the current findings, we found that a research team where all the authors were affiliated to one Arabic institution published one of the six articles mentioned in the original study, and the remaining five articles had a contributing coauthor affiliated to an Arabic institution. In comparison, the current findings showed that in the seven articles published in the past 2½ years, all Arabic authors were contributing coauthors (no article was purely from an Arabic institute). These affiliations had the following coauthorship distribution: Three articles from Egypt,^[2-4] two articles from Saudi Arabia,^[5,6] and one each from Iraq,^[7] and one from Kuwait.^[8]

In one article out of the six coauthors, five were from the same Arabic institution, while the last author was affiliated with a British institute.^[4] This observation raises an important question: Are we unable to publish in such a high ranking journal unless we are part of an international group or at least have an international coauthor?

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Some of the possible reasons for deficient Arab authors contributions in high ranking journals were suggested, including technical reasons (lack of funds and financial support, poor research infrastructure, and difficulties in obtaining appropriate data from insufficient hospitals documentation systems), and non-technical reasons which are mostly related to researchers and policy-makers (unsuitable work environment, disputes among authors, and losing researchers through what is called “brain drain”).^[9]

We believe that to compete in the publishing race within the high ranking journals, solutions may include improving collaborations between national Arabic orthopedic associations; creating multicentric research teams and projects; concentrating on problems specific to Arab areas; providing solutions and guidelines for management; and creating specialized bodies resembling the large European societies, such as the European Hip and the European Knee societies. The later could help in gathering experts to create mega research projects for further publications.

In conclusion, we could say that we made progress. The Arabic authors' contribution to the BJJ nearly doubled in the past 2½ years compared to the 5 preceding years. However, more effort and high-quality research production are still needed.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

AAK carried out the study conception and design. MAH carried out data acquisition, AAK and MAH carried out interpretation of data. Both authors drafted the manuscript. AAK did the critical revision. Both authors discussed the results and commented on the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of interest

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