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Elevating Research Standards

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Elevating Research Standards

In a recent message to readers, the editor lamented that *IJARE*'s request to be indexed by PubMed and Medline had been denied, without explanation. I share the desire of the editor and others to see good quality aquatic research indexed at these prestigious levels. I am concerned, however, that we are our own worst enemies in accomplishing this.

While there has been some excellent research published in *IJARE*, seemingly in accordance with accepted scientific research practices, it seems there is too little of this level of research being produced. This apparently creates a conundrum for the editor. He can either shrink the size of the publication or choose to include material that is below accepted scientific research standards, thus reducing the likelihood of eventual acceptance by the premier indexing bodies.

Recently, for example, an article classified as research was published which had been authored by the principals of a lifeguard training organization. Their "research" essentially found that the methods they market are efficacious. Never mind that they used human subjects without consent and that an aspect of their protocols is reviled by the medical community worldwide. The conflicts of interest in this article were overwhelming. I, for one, would be embarrassed to see this sort of material indexed, as it would demonstrate the degree to which we tolerate charlatans.

In another recent article classified as research, the author produced some fascinating details on drowning on a Hawaiian island. The raw data seemed well researched. Unfortunately, the author then went on to cite various opinions on what to do about this, which were not buttressed by the research in the article. For example, he suggested that better signs would be a good way of reducing drowning deaths, without apparent evidence that signs of the nature he recommended are indeed effective.

To avoid this sort of problem in future and to increase the likelihood that *IJARE* might eventually be more prestigiously indexed, I encourage the editor to more rigidly evaluate what is submitted as research, using peer reviewers familiar with current scientific standards, ideally people who have themselves been published in recognized scientific journals. The remainder of submissions that are accepted for publication can be classified as opinion, or similar, but conflicts should nevertheless be very clearly stated. While this may reduce the amount of content labeled as research in *IJARE*, it will serve to increase its integrity, which will inure to its benefit when the next applications are submitted to PubMed and Medline.

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