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Forensic Science Journals - Where do we stand?

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EDITORIAL

Scientific journals play a vital role in enhancing the capabilities of a society to develop successfully. They are at the heart of recent research findings, new discoveries and via a peer-reviewing and publishing process, vital research information is shared among the scientific community. The strong and positive role of scientific journals is well recognized across the globe in improving educational standards, giving new direction to scientific research, discovering new remedies for diseases, revolutionizing industries, developing the latest technologies, and boosting the economic progress of the society.

The powerful impact of scientific journals in their specialist fields is attributable to two of their key elements: the original research which is conducted devotedly and reported carefully - and the closed peer reviewing process by leading experts. These elements, coupled with the strategically timed and regular publishing of research in journals, have been the leading

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factor in maintaining high standards of scientific research, both theoretical and applied, in various disciplines of physical and natural sciences.

Academic journals in the natural sciences have a long and successful history. The earliest known scientific journals were first published in the year 1665 when Henry Oldenburg from the Royal Society, England, published the first issue of the "Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society", and Denis de Sallo, a French writer and lawyer from Paris, published "Journal des Sçavans" [1]. Almost three and a half centuries has passed and both of these journals, with slight modifications, are still in existence. At present, there are thousands of social, physical and natural science journals serving researchers, scholars and academics worldwide.

According to the 2012 report by the STM (International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers), there are about 28,100 active scholarly peer-reviewed scientific journals in science, technology, and medicine – collectively publishing about 1.8-1.9 million articles per year, whose number is increasing annually by 3.5%. [2]. In another report, Larson and von Ins (2010) documented an overall growth rate of science journals not less than 4.7% per year [3].

Knowing how many of these 28,100 scientific journals cover various fields of forensic science and forensic medicine is of primary concern to us as experts. In order to find out about the growth in forensic science literature, the top ranking source journals, author productivity, and

Table 1- List of active forensic science, forensic medicine and toxicology journals in comparison with other natural science journals in the SCImago Journal & Country Rank (SJR) database*

<i>Keywords</i>	<i>No. of Journals</i>
Forensics	4
Forensic	29
Forensic Science	8
Forensic Medicine	7
Legal	32
Legal Medicine	7
Medicolegal	2
Toxicology	74
Forensic Toxicology	1
Forensic Medicine and Toxicology	3
Chemistry + Chemical	527
Medicine + Medical	944
Biology + Biological	461
Physics	258
Engineering	624

*<http://www.scimagojr.com/journalsearch.php>

the productivity by country, Jeyasekar and Saravanan (2014) conducted a scientometric study of forensic science literature published between 1975 – 2011 using the SCOPUS database under the keyword “forensic science” [4]. According to their findings, a total of 1175 research articles were published in 2011, compared to 89 articles in 1975, showing an increase of approximately 32 articles per year. In addition, the authors also provided a list of the top 10 ranking forensic science journals [4].

The SCImago Journal & Country Rank (SJR) database includes the journals and country scientific indicators developed from the information contained in the Scopus® database (Elsevier B.V.) [5]. This platform is developed by SCImago from the widely known algorithm Google PageRank™ and shows the visibility of the journals contained in the Scopus® database from 1996 onwards [5]. This database provides information about the current status of active journals in various disciplines of natural sciences. Several keywords, covering forensic science, forensic medicine and toxicology journals (table 1), were entered into the website (<http://www.scimagojr.com/2013/journalsearch.php>) to search against the Journal Title database and the results are summarized in table-1, with

a comparison between forensic science and journals from other natural science disciplines. Very few forensic science, forensic medicine and toxicology journals are published in the Arab world (data not shown). Moreover, Table-1 also shows that the number of forensic science and forensic medicine journals is far less than the other natural science journals.

The Index Medicus for the Eastern Mediterranean Region (IMEMR) is another useful health related journal database dedicated to mapping and archiving health based literature published in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. It is one of the major projects of the Virtual Health Sciences Library (VHSL) [6-7]. The VHSL is an electronic health sciences library network created by the WHO Regional Office in collaboration with Member States [7] and provides access to electronic health and biomedical information resources for health care professionals. The IMEMR is a unique tool for indexing, abstracting, recording, archiving, and sharing regional health based knowledge. Currently, the Index includes more than 125,000 Bibliographic citations from more than 551 health and biomedical journals published in 20 countries in the Region: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Jordan,



Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, the occupied Palestinian territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen [6,8].

The IMEMR Journals Directory is a Bibliographic repository for all information about health and biomedical sciences journals that are published in the Region and indexed in IMEMR [8]. There are 551 journals listed in this database covering 72 different subjects in health, biological and biomedical sciences. Unfortunately, "Forensic Science" is not included in the subject list of the IMEMR Journal Directory. Of the total 551 journals listed in the IMEMR Journals Directory, 288 (52.27%) are being published in the Arab world. Surprisingly, of these 288 journals, only 5 were listed under the subject "Forensic Medicine" and one under "Toxicology", indicating that only six Forensic Medicine & Toxicology journals are published in 22 Arab countries. There are other forensic science journals that are published in the Arab world and are known to academics and practitioners, but those are not listed in these databases. However, even taking this into account, there is still a serious lack of forensic science and forensic medicine journals in the Arab world where this speciality is still in its infancy and needs major development. Based upon this preliminary data, it seems clear, and readers may also agree to this fact, that there is a strong need for more forensic science and forensic medicine journals in the Arab world and Internationally.

The launch of this journal – the Arab Journal of Forensic Sciences and Forensic Medicine (AJFSFM) - is a sincere effort to meet this need and challenge of providing forensic scientists and medicolegal professionals of the Arab world with a successful and effective platform to develop and disseminate forensic science knowledge and skills. This is one of the major objectives of the Arab Society for Forensic Sciences and Forensic Medicine (ASFSFM) and has been achieved with the launch of the Journal.

We understand the huge academic and professional responsibility of developing research and practice in forensic sciences and forensic medicine due to their essential role in preventing and fighting crime. And we recognize that tremendous effort will be required to

establish and make this journal stand out as one of the best forensic science journals in the world.

The AJFSFM is very optimistic that with the contribution of leading regional and world experts in forensic sciences and forensic medicine and the guidance of the experienced academic and professional scholars of the Editorial & Advisory Board, we will be able to accomplish our vision, mission and objective in presenting one of the most trusted forensic science journals for the publication of original and creative research. So help us God.

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