

The JOGC's Journey to an Impact Factor



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For the last decade, one of the main objectives of the editorial office of the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada* (JOGC) has been to obtain an impact factor for the journal. Despite the growing popularity of other journal metrics, the impact factor remains the quality metric of record for researchers and authors around the world. The JOGC's journey to the impact factor has been long, and we are pleased to write that our destination is in sight.

The impact factor equation, introduced by Garfield and Sher in the early 1960s, takes the number of citations of articles published in a journal in the current year and previous 2 years and divides it by the number of substantive (i.e., non-editorial) articles published in the same 2 years.¹ Starting in 1992, the Canadian multinational media corporation Thomson Reuters published this metric for peer-reviewed journals indexed in their Web of Science. In 2016, Thomson Reuters' Intellectual Property & Science business, which included the Web of Science, was acquired, and thus the independent analytics company Clarivate was born. Clarivate would go on to restructure the Web of Science, reserving the impact factor metric for only its "most impactful" journals. This change meant that, on a go-forward basis, only journals included in their most selective indices—the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE), the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and the Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI)—would receive an impact factor.

When the JOGC moved from an independent publishing model to Elsevier in 2016, one of the journal's first priorities was to secure an impact factor. Elsevier submitted our application to Clarivate in February 2018, and within just 2 months, the JOGC was accepted into the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), a precursor to the SCIE. At the time of our application, we were told that a journal

was required to spend a set period of time in the ESCI before a team of experts would evaluate the journal against an impact criteria to determine whether the journal would be included in an impact factor—eligible index. These criteria evaluated the types of citations articles received, the citation record of authors who published in the journal, the citation record of the members of the journal's editorial board, and a content analysis that valued the originality of the research and its relevance to Web of Science subscribers.² Clarivate soon moved away from a fixed schedule for evaluations, as our publisher advised us that a journal must rank within the top 2 quartiles of journals in their field before they would be evaluated for an impact factor. So, with this new requirement, the JOGC had no choice but to wait for news of when we might be evaluated for an impact factor. And we waited. And waited. And waited.

In the meantime, the editorial office fielded questions about our impact factor (or rather our lack thereof). After all, despite the existence of other journal metrics, academic institutions and funding agencies use the impact factor for promotion, financial bonuses, and salary increases. An impact factor increases a journal's prestige and therefore helps it attract submissions. We even learned that some institutions in other countries require that their researchers restrict submissions to journals with an impact factor. Internally, we wondered about our standing within the Web of Science. Although the JOGC has, for the last 2 years, ranked in the top 2 quartiles of obstetrics and gynaecology journals in Scopus, Elsevier's citation database,

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Clarivate's metrics did not rank us as achieving this threshold. We asked difficult questions about the types of research to consider.

These questions and dilemmas were resolved when Clarivate announced on July 26, 2022, that it would grant impact factors to all journals indexed in the Web of Science's Core Collection, including the ESCI. The change would come into effect with the next release of Clarivate's journal citation reports, in June 2023.³

The long-awaited announcement that JOGC would receive an impact factor was welcome news for the journal and its supporting society, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. Even without an impact factor, JOGC remains a reputable journal that attracts national and international submissions. We have a CiteScore of 2.5 based on the last 3 years of citation data, and JOGC's h-index of 73 places us in the top quartile of obstetrics and gynaecology journals, according to Scimago. The h-index reflects "the number of papers (h) published in a journal that have been cited at least h times,"⁴ which means that, to date, 73 JOGC articles have been cited 73 times or more. In contrast to the time-limited impact factor, the h-index speaks to our

long record of publishing influential research and clinical practice guidelines.

As we await our first impact factor, the journal's goals remain attracting high-quality research articles and systematic reviews or meta-analyses. Over the last 2 years, we have stopped considering case reports and narrative reviews. Reaching for the goal of publishing the highest quality clinical research may indeed increase the journal's impact factor, but the over-40-year history of the JOGC has taught us that the true value of a journal cannot be measured with a simple equation.

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