

Dear Ann

As a reader and regular contributor of the *Australian Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis (AJCEH)*, I should like to draw to the council's attention some important information regarding open access publishing and the relevance of this to our journal, *Contemporary Hypnosis and Integrative Therapy (CH&IT)*. I am not an expert on the subject; however, I should like to draw readers' attention to a number of observations that I have noticed over the last five years. It seems that contributions by scholars, especially academics involved in experimental research, have reduced significantly. This is certainly the case with the Australian journal, according to editor Graham Jamieson (2013); indeed, he believes that other peer-reviewed journals—for example, the *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis (IJCEH)* and *CH&IT*—follow similar trends.

So what are the reasons for this? Certainly, in Australia, the government assesses university research output and awards each university an ERA (Excellence in Research for Australia) ranking from 1 to 5. These scores are used to determine block-funding for academic research. The research output of each university is analyzed and judged on a quality rating based on various citation indexes, which are measured by the average frequency of references per published paper. Journals with the lowest rank—and this includes *AJCEH*, *CH&IT* and, believe it or not, *IJCEH*—actually lower rankings for each subject taught at university. Jamieson points out that there is a vicious cycle: academics are actively discouraged to publish in these lower ranking journals and, as a result, fewer people draw on the journal for research purposes. This means that the possibility of an academic citing a paper is reduced still further. Furthermore, it is more difficult to publish clinical or experimental research in other, more highly ranked, journals.

Similar principles are used here in the UK to assess the importance of a journal. In the UK, we use the Journal Impact Factor which calculates the average number of citations in a journal over a period of two years. The higher the impact factor, the more prestigious the journal. There are drawbacks to this system, however, as the average number of citations can be skewed by the author frequently referencing themselves, and also it evaluates the average number of citations for the whole journal and cannot be used to analyze an individual authors' impact. Certainly, *CH&IT*, a journal which I value tremendously as a resource, seems to be a domestic 'British' journal rather than a global force in the field of academic research, even though contributions throughout John Gruzelier's editorship have come from all over the world. And, even though occasional papers appear from eminent academics—such as Alladin, Kirsch and Gruzelier—a great deal of work is needed to increase the journal's sphere of influence.

This all sounds gloomy and this is meant to be a helpful letter. Jamieson points out that open access publishing, if backed by the appropriate professional society and supported by academics who research hypnosis at university, will help significantly in increasing the ranking of a journal. He goes on further to say that,

Established journals of legitimate academic societies (such as *AJCEH* and the *ASH*) with a credible editorial board and peer review process currently possess a potential competitive advantage in the open access publishing environment. To realize this potential (which will only exist for a limited time) such journals must be able to make accepted material rapidly available to a worldwide audience of end users beyond the professional society membership. (Jamieson, 2013, Editorial).

Furthermore, it is important to provide meta tags for each published paper in order that it be recognized by indexing systems such as Google Scholar and Scopus. In conclusion, I think that it would be a good idea for council to discuss the possibility of open access for *CH&IT*, and also for

reciprocal link to be made between BSCAH, the Australian Society of Hypnosis Limited as well as the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis (ASCH). I think that, perhaps, the low ranking of hypnosis journals is inextricably linked to the general view of hypnosis amongst doctors and psychologists around the world; and, if we want this powerful adjunctive tool to be utilized in hospitals, we need to help researchers to get access to evidence-based papers on the subject. Put simply, we have seen the evidence that hypnosis works; we now need to make it well known to others.

I would welcome any comments on this letter and would be interested to hear Peter Naish's thoughts on the subject.

Reference

Jamieson, G.A. (2013). Editorial. *The Australian Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, 40, iii-v.

All the best

David Kraft