

Impact factors and contact dermatitis

Journal impact factors were first proposed by Eugene Garfield in 1955 to help facilitate the dissemination and retrieval of scientific literature (1). An experimental *Genetics Citation Index*[®] was initially published by Garfield and Irving Sher in the 1960s, which subsequently led to the first *Science Citation Index*[®] and foundation of the *Institute for Scientific Information (ISI)* (2). From early analyses, it was quickly noticed that a relatively small group of core journals were collecting the majority of all citations, a phenomenon that continues today. In recent years, the concept of an impact factor has now evolved to explain both journal and author impacts (2). Alongside these developments, bibliographic analysis of citation data has also gained popularity, providing an increasingly detailed insight into the past and future trends of academic research and journal publishing. Various citation-based research has been conducted in the field of dermatology, including a study of impact factor trends between 1991 and 2000 (3), trends in central European publishing between 1991 and 2002 (4), as well as a study of skin-related publications between 1966 and 2003 (5). From the scientific literature, it can be seen that many milestone discoveries have been made in recent years that have helped better understand the fundamental pathophysiology of skin disease (5).

Specialist topics have always required specialist journals (3), and a postwar scientific revolution led to many benefits for practitioners in the field of contact dermatitis (6). A major consequence of these developments was the recognition of subgroups within established clinical specialties, particularly among those who were interested in the relationships between exposure to various chemical substances and subsequent dermatitis. The *International Contact Dermatitis Research Group* evolved from the Scandinavian contact dermatitis group during the 1970s, which had itself been producing an informal newsletter to exchange scientific information for 8 years (6). Partly as a consequence of these developments, the journal *Contact Dermatitis* was first founded in 1975 with Dr Charles Calnan as foundation Editor-in-Chief (6).

Between 1975 and 1983, *Contact Dermatitis* comprised 1 volume of 6 issues per year, expanding to 2 volumes of 5 issues each (10 issues per year in total) between 1984 and 1994. In 1995, the journal further expanded by publishing 2 volumes of 6 issues each per year, a format that continues today. An electronic submission system for manuscripts began in 2005 (7). The earliest *Medline*[®] entries date to Volume 1 in 1975, and by the end of 2007, over 7500 articles had been indexed. By 2003, it had been estimated that full-text articles from the journal were being downloaded over 1000 times per month (8). *Contact Dermatitis* is now ranked seventh out of 16 periodicals and eighth out of 39 periodicals for the *ISI Journal Citation Reports*[®] categories of 'Allergy' and 'Dermatology', respectively (9). The journal is currently edited by Professor Torkil Menné at the University of Copenhagen and is mainly targeted at clinicians interested in various aspects of environmental dermatitis, both allergic and irritant types, as well as occupational dermatitis and consumers' dermatitis from various domestic products (9).

Although *Contact Dermatitis* has had an impact factor since the early 1970s, the journal's score rose dramatically after 2002 reaching to 2.701 in 2005 (10) and is currently sitting at 2.446 (9). There were presumably 2 reasons for this remarkable increase in such a short period of time. First, certain categories of articles were no longer being counted in the denominator upon which the impact factor calculation is based. Second, it can be assumed that this recent upsurge also reflects the rising importance of modern contact dermatitis research, not only for clinicians, but also for the wider community of scientific researchers and general citizens. As such, it remains to be seen what the next 30 years of impact factors will bring for the field of contact dermatitis.

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