

# Necessary changes in our *Jornal Vascular Brasileiro*

## *Mudanças necessárias no Jornal Vascular Brasileiro*

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The *Jornal Vascular Brasileiro* was established in June 2002, and in its short, roughly eight-year existence, has experienced significant development. Since 2004, it has been indexed in SciELO, the foremost Brazilian bibliographic database, and in subsequent years was added to several international citation indices, such as EMBASE, EBSCO, SCOPUS, SIIC, and REDALYC. Article submission rates, while still far from ideal, increased, as did the publication of articles authored by foreign researchers. We introduced several new features: online submission and review, electronic publication ahead of print, and real-time access to illustrative video files for various articles. In recognition of our progress, we received article submissions from outside Brazil, and for 2 consecutive years, *J Vasc Bras* received publishing grants from the National Council of Scientific and Technological Development (*Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico*, CNPq), placing us in the company of a select few Brazilian journals. *J Vasc Bras* must break into the international scientific publications scene through its two most important indexing services: MEDLINE and ISI.

In late 2008 and early 2009, we applied for MEDLINE and ISI indexing respectively, and, throughout 2009, the journal was assessed by a group of reviewers from both databases. In early 2010, MEDLINE declined our request. The National Library of Medicine (NLM), which runs MEDLINE, does not provide access to reviewer feedback and allows reassessment only after a 2-year period has elapsed. Alongside the Publications Department of the Brazilian Society of Angiology and Vascular Surgery, we approached SciELO in an attempt to understand the reasoning behind the NLM's decision. This meeting was very enlightening, and from it we learned that various factors may have contributed to this unfavorable outcome. NLM reviewers use an assessment scorecard that considers the following criteria:

punctuality, quality, ratio of original articles to case reports and reviews, quality of English translations, and peer reviewer qualifications.

In retrospect, we detect several weaknesses in our journal. Throughout 2009, we were not punctual, the quality of English-language content was poor in several issues, and the overall quality of original articles in terms of scientific evidence left quite a bit to be desired.

A brief analysis of some of the topics discussed is in order. Tardiness, in particular, was due to a low volume of article submissions and to the fact that many reviewers were slow to complete their assessments. MEDLINE-indexed Brazilian journals receive at least 300 articles a year, giving editors some leeway when closing each issue. As we receive no more than a hundred or so article submissions a year, *J Vasc Bras* barely meets its quarterly deadlines for issue content. Approximately 25% of submitted articles are turned down, and around 5% are withdrawn from processing by their authors; this – coupled with many reviewer delays – means we only just manage to secure the exact number of articles required for each quarterly issue. Although the Brazilian Society of Angiology and Vascular Surgery has a prodigious output of scholarly papers, sadly, only 6.3% of these articles go on to be published in scientific journals.<sup>1</sup> Several Brazilian learned societies now require that papers be submitted for their conferences in the form of unabridged, publication-ready manuscripts. This strategy has been quite successful, and has significantly increased the volume of articles published in these societies' journals. The Brazilian Society of Angiology and Vascular Surgery should adopt a similar requirement as a means of encouraging authors to develop short papers into full-fledged articles; this would likely be followed by an increase in *J Vasc Bras* submissions.

The quality of original articles is strongly associated with current Coordinating Agency for Advanced Training

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of Graduate Personnel (CAPES) policy. The finest articles usually come from graduate programs, and their authors are under considerable pressure to publish in high-impact factor international journals. Since the Qualis System rating of *J Vasc Bras* was downgraded, we have no longer received more sophisticated, dissertation-based original articles, which has created a vicious circle: top-notch articles are no longer submitted to *J Vasc Bras*; MEDLINE indexing becomes ever less likely; and, without MEDLINE indexing, the Journal's Qualis rating cannot improve.

As for our reviewers, many show no commitment whatsoever to punctuality, which greatly hinders our efforts to close each issue of the Journal. On the other hand, SciELO has also informed us that the NLM analyzes the scientific output of each reviewer listed as being part of the Journal's Editorial Board, and also studies the number of citations each reviewer has obtained. As this assessment is a key criterion for indexing decisions, we are conducting a similar survey ourselves. This should provide a useful guideline for a restructuring of our Editorial Board with a view to reapplying for MEDLINE indexing in 2 years.

Last but not least, we are still eagerly awaiting ISI's decision on adding *J Vasc Bras* to the Web of Science. ISI indexing would come as a major encouragement and provide

a key supporting factor for a second attempt at MEDLINE inclusion.

Without MEDLINE and ISI indexing, our journal has no chance at surviving in the international or Brazilian medical publishing market. The lack of a prestigious journal would weaken the Society, as *J Vasc Bras* is a mirror of our scholarly output. If we are to improve our standing in this respect, it is imperative that our colleagues spare no effort to publish articles and that our reviewers complete their assessments in a timely manner.

Furthermore, as part of the major overhaul we find ourselves compelled to make over the next 2 years, we joined forces with the Society's Department of Publications and commissioned a new cover for *J Vasc Bras* in order to improve the design and identity of our journal. This cover is already being introduced.

Once again, I urge our colleagues: honor the Brazilian Society of Angiology and Vascular Surgery by submitting your articles to *J Vasc Bras*.

## Reference

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