EDITORIAL

Is impact a factor?

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A long time ago now, the only way to find references and citations involved a trip to the library to consult the endless shelves of telephone book-sized volumes of *Index Medicus*. In those days the choice of journal to publish in was guided as much by national identity as by any idea of journal quality. Medical journals were not as self-conscious as they are now: given a favorable peer-review they would publish what was relevant, including letters and case reports, with no concern for impact factor. That has all changed of course. Medical scientific publishing is locked in an arms race where journals struggle fiercely to better their competitors. This involves aggressive solicitation of reviews (paying large amounts if need be), elimination of any content that has a low chance of further citation and even, as a form of bootstrap logistics, the exhortation of contributors to cite papers published in that journal.

*Cytotherapy* is of course mindful of this arms race and is certainly keen to raise its impact progressively by appropriate modeling of its contents. With an ever-increasing number of submissions and limited page space, our journal has the opportunity as well as the necessity to maintain stringency in paper selection, thereby raising its impact factor. However, we believe journals should also maintain some humility. As G. K. Chesterton said: ‘The great human dogma … is that the wind moves the trees. The great human heresy is that the trees move the wind’. It behoves us to remember that a journal is only as relevant and important as the field it covers. No amount of Machiavellian tactics to improve the impact factor are worthwhile if the subject area of a journal is too specialized or in a backwater. *Cytotherapy* is fortunate to be in a rapidly developing field of experimental cell therapy which is attracting world-wide interest.

In addition, we believe our journal has goals other than simply to advance its impact factor. We are also the official journal of the International Society of Cell Therapy (ISCT) and our progress and success are locked in step with the expansion of that society. For this reason we have recently updated our editorial board from members of the ISCT (see this issue) and we remain a mouthpiece for the Society and its new relationships with industry. In future issues we hope to serve the cell therapy community by publishing a series of articles under the heading ‘Protocols in cytotherapy’. These articles will summarize good manufacturing practice (GMP)-grade techniques for cell manufacture for clinical use. The published paper will follow a brief format describing the characteristics and properties of the cell to be manufactured, the technique, quality control and release criteria, and the clinical applications. A URL will direct the interested reader to all the detailed standard operating procedures (SOP) and information needed to establish manufacture of the cell. We want this series to make quality cell production available to many and improve reproducibility and validity of cell therapy world-wide. We hope that this will be an important service to the cell therapy community: and maybe who knows? It may increase our impact factor.