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RESEARCH AND SURGERY

Reasons to write and publish scientific articles

Razones para escribir y publicar artículos científicos

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Introduction

There are reasons to publish. As Scott Fitzgerald said, "You don't have to write because you want to say something, you have to write because you have something to say." The continuous increase in healthcare, teaching and administrative obligations, added to the little recognition of the institutions and the scarce economic stimulus, threaten the academic development of surgeons. With these arguments, the vast majority of surgeons do not consider it important to publish; however, scientific productivity increases the reputation of surgical services and increases the possibility of obtaining economic resources. For this reason, the role of scientific publications is increasingly important. [1].

Due to these factors, it could be postulated that there are two types of reasons that would justify publishing: altruistic and personal. The first include the desire to disseminate the observations and experiments carried out; doctors have a moral obligation to communicate any significant new observation, whether positive or negative [2]. The latter include improving one's own knowledge, promotion within the academic field and recognition from colleagues. In an academic hospital it is the responsibility of the senior members to create an environment that is conducive to the development of the younger members so that they grow scientifically and acquire their own intellectual independence.

Priorities for publishing

It may be difficult for young surgeons to know what and where to publish, and especially how to write. The interest can vary from publishing a

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case presentation to a good article in a high-impact journal, which will depend on the knowledge required for each publication. Retrospective studies are at a higher level, and prospective randomized studies require an appropriate academic or international collaboration setting.

The number of protocols registered in institutions that, once completed, are presented in academic activities in oral or poster format is important, but there is a disproportion when verifying how many of those protocols culminate in publication. The main limiting factor is the failure to produce the final document, or its completion in a deficient manner, which is unacceptable to the editorial committees.

The act of writing requires a series of knowledge and skills so that the idea you want to present can be disseminated and have an impact. The production of a scientific article is a means of communication of science, so the results of research that provide new knowledge must be published. It is important to recognize that the quality of the research goes hand in hand with the writing of the manuscript; good research must be accompanied by good writing, otherwise it will have the same result as bad research without dissemination. Due to this, so that the results of quality research can be disseminated and have an impact, their writing must also be of good quality.

Research Impact

The word impact has a lot of relevance in research. Impact *per se* is defined as an impression or effect that an event produces on the senses. In scientific literature the term used is 'impact factor' (IF), which counts the average frequency with which an article is cited during a given period. The IF of a journal is calculated by dividing the number of citations in one year by the number of publications from that journal in the previous two years [3]. It was invented by Eugene Garfield (1925-2017), founder of the Institute for Scientific Information and creator of the Web of Science in the early 1960s, an organization originally aimed at librarians with the purpose of estimating the cost-benefit analyses of a scientific journal. It is currently used as a quantitative measure of the quality of a journal, its articles and authors.

From the premise of the need to evaluate the quality of research, a series of indices have also been generated. Today one of the most used is the h-index, which was designed by the Argentine physicist Jorge Hirsch, and attempts to demonstrate the quality of the researcher [4,5], combining the number of publications with their impact measured by the number of citations. In other words, while the IF predominantly evaluates journals, the h-index shows the quality of the researcher.

Final considerations

The editors of the Colombian Journal of Surgery (*Revista Colombiana de Cirugía*) wish to facilitate this task and for that reason we have made the decision to start a new section in which we will include topics on research, from the point of view of the surgeons who have traveled the path, sharing the learning obtained in the exercise, seeking from experience to avoid the repetition of errors or the inclusion of biases that affect the result of the research. We hope you like it and find it useful.

Compliance with ethical standards

Informed consent: This study is a literature review, and as such, there is no need for informed consent or Institutional Ethics Committee approval.

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- Data analysis and interpretation: Patrizio Petrone, Mónica Bejarano.
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- Critical review and final approval: Patrizio Petrone, Mónica Bejarano.

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