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How is the *BDJ* doing?

The launch of the new design for the *British Dental Journal* on January 11th gave me the opportunity to look at how the *BDJ* has fared from a scientific and general viewpoint over the last 10 years since my appointment as editor. One thing I have definitely noticed is the difference between some of the anecdotal perceptions of the *BDJ* and the reality as revealed by the actual data. This is especially true over the perception that the *BDJ* is not relevant to general practitioners (still heard I regret to say) and the belief among some academic dentists that the *BDJ* is not a 'serious' scientific journal. From the data we have collected it would seem that neither is true.

The data for measuring how well the *BDJ* has developed over the decade comes from two main sources. The general data came from four independent readership surveys carried out by the Education and Science Department at the BDA over the last 10 years. The scientific data comes from the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) in the USA.

The general data has been collected by carrying out four readership surveys, in 1992, 1995, 1997 and 1999. Each time approximately 1,000 BDA members selected at random were surveyed, and the response rates of between 50% and 68% were phenomenal for readership surveys (the norm is around 5–10%). These surveys identified which areas of the *BDJ* are considered popular and useful, but more importantly showed a growth of readership over the 10 years. Over the ten years the *BDJ* has also moved from the least read journal (among the popular dental press) to the most read, despite the additional number of dental publications in the market. Thus it would seem that the misconception that the *BDJ* is of little relevance to practitioners is not borne out by the facts that over the last 3–4 years more people read more of each *BDJ* than any other dental publication.

There are also some interesting findings with regard to the scientific standing of the *BDJ* among other dental scientific journals. The usual measure of scientific importance for journals is the Impact Factor, a measure

of how often articles are cited in other scientific journals. However, as I point out below, this is not the only measure and perhaps not the most significant in terms of scientific relevance.

In 2000 the *BDJ*'s Impact Factor was 0.822, making it the 27th journal that year in the League Table for dental journals. At first sight this may not appear very significant, but is hardly surprising as the *BDJ* is an association journal and contains opinion and practice articles as well as research papers, ensuring that its Impact Factor is bound to be lower than for pure research journals. Of more importance is the fact that the Impact Factor for the *BDJ* has been steadily improving over the last few years so that it is almost at the same level as *JADA* (Journal of the American Dental Association) and is way ahead of the only two other association journals in the ISI database.

There are other relevant measures in scientific publishing, the immediacy index and the number of total citations. The Immediacy Index is a measure of how quickly articles are cited by other journals. In 2000 the *BDJ* was second in the league (out of approximately 45 journals) putting it way ahead of virtually all other scientific journals. This indicates that researchers consider articles in the *BDJ* are relevant and timely as authors are citing them in the same year they are published. Total citations is the total number of times a journal has been cited (by other journals in the ISI database) in a given year, regardless of when the article was published. Again the *BDJ* does well, occupying 10th position out of 46 journals in 2000. With both these measures the *BDJ* has performed consistently well over the last four years, unlike some other journals that tend to move up and down the league table fairly dramatically.

Thus it would seem from the data that the *BDJ* continues to hold its place in scientific publishing, whilst at the same time proving to be the most read dental publication for practitioners.

Mike Grace, *BDJ* editor