

Science academies in India

The basic objective of all science academies in India is to recognize the best talent in various fields of science and also to nurture these disciplines for sustained growth. The three prominent science academies, e.g. Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi; National Academy of Sciences, Allahabad and Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore select their fellows strictly based on their performance, which is considered as top most recognition for a scientist.

However, I personally feel that the current practices of selection are not fool proof and need radical changes. In fact, various disciplines of science are being left out, because of the existing broad classification of subjects. For example, biological science should cover bioinformatics, pharmaceuticals, molecular biology and classical experimental medicine including toxicology. Similarly, medical science should include allopathy/herbal medicine/food supplements/nutraceuticals. Currently, they are not being given due importance and there is a need to reserve a number of fellowships for these growing branches, because they are equally important for science as well as our

nation. Traditional medicine, which is an emerging branch of medical science, belongs to this neglected category. However, keeping in mind the importance of the subject, many senior scientists and doctors have initiated research in this field, with tools of modern science.

There may be several good scientists with significant contributions, but these academies do not have any objective parameters to assess them or their work in comparison with scientists working in the field of basic research.

Research in herbal medicine to scientifically validate plants, used in various systems of alternative medicine in India, is an example of this paradoxical situation. The importance of this field is evident by a planning commission report, which has projected that India has less than 2% global herbal market, whereas China with similar biodiversity and other ecological conditions has 25% share. The cause has been identified as the lack of scientific data on Indian herbs. Work in the field may be published in Indian journals, which most often do not have a high impact factor. Unfortunately, this work is being compared with scientists

involved in basic research and publishing in better journals. Another important issue is related to those scientists who are busy developing science support systems. According to R. Chidambaram, Principal Scientific Advisor to Govt of India, 'there is a need to have national-requirement oriented basic research'. Thus, there is a need to develop a system with objective parameters so that scientists of both types could be compared for their innovative research of national interest. A model has to be adopted by these academies to respect such research. Importance should be given to such scientists and a quota should be developed within the existing sections. This will boost the morale of such researchers. When we have such provisions in the Presidential awards, why not in this field of talent search?

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Five Indian journals cross impact factor 1.000 in 2008

Among the 45 Indian journals covered in the *Journal Citation Reports 2008*, Science Edition, five journals have crossed impact factor (IF) of 1.000 (Table 1; ref. 1). *Indian Journal of Medical Research*, published by the Indian Council of

Medical Research, New Delhi tops the tally with IF of 1.883. A total of 6598 journals are covered in the *JCR 2008*.

In 2004, two Indian journals crossed IF of 1.000 for the first time². Since then this upward trend has been continuing³.

One hopes that Indian journals will cross IF of 2.000 in the near future.

Table 1. Indian journals with impact factor of 1.000 or more during 2008

Journal	ISSN	Impact factor (2008)
<i>Indian Journal of Medical Research</i>	0971-5916	1.883
<i>Journal of Biosciences</i>	0250-5991	1.703
<i>Journal of Environmental Biology</i>	0254-8704	1.359
<i>Journal of Postgraduate Medicine</i>	0022-3859	1.538
<i>Neurology India</i>	0028-3886	1.095

1. *Journal Citation Reports 2008*, Science Edition (CD-ROM), Thomson Reuters, Philadelphia, 2009.
2. Jain, N. C., *Curr. Sci.*, 2005, **89**, 429.
3. Jain, N. C., *Curr. Sci.*, 2009, **94**, 7.

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