Reviewer’s report

Title: Bridging knowledge translation gap in health in developing countries: visibility and publishing standards in journals from the Eastern Mediterranean

Version: 2 Date: 30 January 2012

Reviewer: Ritu Sadana

Reviewer’s report:

General compulsory revisions

- The paper documents an important effort to look at the journals in the region. Encourage authors to revise the paper taking on board these comments, and focus on communicating the essential or main findings.

- Needs editing for English, some sentences are incomplete or missing words.

- Visibility vs. impact has been defined in different ways. Please clarify in the introduction what this means and within the methods section, how it is measured. For example, is it visibility as referenced in a database, or as referenced in another journal, or if the list of authors includes people from different disciplines, different institutions within the country, or from across the region, or from outside of the region. Is impact the same as referenced by others (data bases or researchers) or is it how the research has influenced policies or practices? There are also additional metrics, “ready made”, metrics used. How do these fit in within the concept of visibility or impact?

- The paper would benefit from organizing results and discussions on the different issues that are being considered, e.g. perhaps on one hand in reaching the mainstream scientific community (would be good to define if this is within the region, outside of the region, or something else), and on the other, to those who can use the information within the region to make a difference to policy and programs (whether other researchers, health practitioners, policy makers, journalists, etc.).

- How was it established what was of regional or local relevance? To what extent are these areas of relevance expected or not? Are these based on burden of disease, health system challenges, or some other kind of criteria?

Compulsory and essential revisions

Introduction:

1. Please clarify logic in this sentence:

“We used the availability of the World Health Organization (WHO) regional indexes of health materials to study journals in the Eastern Mediterranean, the
region where current social and political changes across the countries [13] provide local health information with global relevance.”

2. Kindly connect the assessment proposed and the analysis conducted, more clearly, perhaps framed as objectives of the study.

“To assess the presence of health-related research from the Eastern Mediterranean in the global scientific community, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of indexing of IMEMR journals in major bibliographical databases, citations to published items in these journals in major global citation databases Web of Science and SCOPUS [16], and adherence to editorial and publishing standards in these journals [17].”

Methods:

3. To what extent did indexing and citation analysis concur or disagree, as noted in the sentences below?

“Indexing and citation analysis was performed by one of the authors (AU) and independently checked by another (AM); disagreements were discussed and resolved to reach consensus. The assessment of publication standards was performed by one of the authors who had access to journals in the WHO EMRO library (NC). The data from the checklists were entered in a database and independently verified by another author (AM) and all inconsistencies were discussed to reach consensus.”

4. What are the limitations in the results, and how do these influence the interpretation of the results, given the citation analysis was limited to 172 journals with table of contents, less than half of the 419 journals listed in IMEMR. Or that only the first author’s name was used? Later on page 10 in the manuscript, the limitation is noted, yet not clear on what this implies.

“As most of the missing data were from small, local journals, the results presented may be an overestimation of the full IMEMR and present only the visibility of the higher-quality journals in IMEMR.”

5. In terms of being able to reproduce the methods used, for example in 2 years, is there any more information on the methods, given the following sentence:

“Because of problems in indexing of Arabic names, other bibliographical items, such as journal name and words from the title were used in many cases.”

Results

6. The sections starting on page 7 – page 9 would benefit from clearer presentation of the results, starting with the most important and then adding the details. On approach is to refer to the tables for greater detail, e.g. focus the reporting of results in the areas that are significant to the three assessment areas.
Discussion

7. It is unclear if the purpose was to determine the visibility of journals within the country and region – given the citations to the Guindon et al, and Lavis et al. – or to the global (outside of the region?) research community. If both, it would be useful to address each issue separately. For example, the following statement might be good for the global visibility, at the potential detriment of regional or country visibility:

“Publishing in the English language (80% of the journals) certainly contribute to more effective communication of research to the global scientific community.”

8. Some of the text at the end of page 10 and beginning of page 11 may be more suited for the methods section. Suggest to focus on the essentials. The discussion section would benefit from being more concise, and structured along the lines of the study’s objectives.

9. Given the sentence below, it would be good to list what are the geographical and cultural specificities of journals for the Eastern Med. Region, covering 22 countries that have different development levels, health challenges, and with several different languages.

“At the international level, producers of indexing databases should be aware of the geographical and cultural specificities of journals they receive and formulate their own standards for indexing specific terms.”

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript, provide suggestions and learn from your work.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests. However, I do declare that I work at WHO as one of the authors (AG), yet do not work on any common projects.