Reviewer's report

Title: Time Trends in the Impact Factor of Public Health Journals

Version: 2 Date: 21 December 2004

Reviewer: ARGyro FAStouKAKI

Reviewer's report:

General
This paper investigates the impact factor changes of 80 journals in the Public, Environmental and Occupational Health. It suggests that the trend of the impact factor of these journals may influence the investigators to which journals to submit their work.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The authors should modify the Background and the Discussion sections. High impact factor journals do not necessarily imply high quality of all the articles published in these journals. Some of the articles published in high impact factor journals may have low citation rate and benefit from journals published in the same high impact factor journal. The impact factor has been invented to rank the journals and not to guide the investigators to choose the journal to submit their work.

The aim of the study to predict the high impact factor journals of the next years, helping investigators to select journals for paper submission does not sound practical. The selection of the journal for paper submission depends on several factors like the type of the paper, the type of articles that publishes this particular journal etc.
I suggest the authors should change their focus on the trend of the impact factor of public health journals. The assumptions that investigators submit their work to high impact journals should be deleted.
However, the authors need to analyze in the Discussion if the journals they studied are doing better or worse, and what the changes in their impact factor mean.

Results. Could the authors proceed to cohortization of the impact factor of all these journals and include in one diagram the averaged impact factor of the first 10 top journals, followed by the averaged impact factor of the next 10 journals etc versus time? This way of presentation may be preferable instead of the individual impact factors forming a group of waves out of the sea!

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests below.