

# Indexing of Journals in MEDLINE, PubMed, and Other Bibliographic Databases — Why Not *CJHP*?

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Pharmacists, other health care professionals, and scientists rely on information in biomedical and other professional journals to keep up to date on advances in pharmacy, medicine, pharmacotherapy, pharmacology, and health care in general and to find answers to specific questions related to patient care, research, education, and related issues. Easy access to information in the literature is important for the provision of optimal patient care. For most of us working in health care, literature search tools, particularly searchable online databases, are the major mode of accessing scientific and medical information.

Several publications and searchable databases provide access to articles in biomedical journals, including *Index Medicus*, MEDLINE, PubMed, EMBASE, BIOSIS, Scirus, ScienceDirect, Current Contents Direct, and International Pharmaceutical Abstracts (IPA). *Index Medicus* is the print version of the bibliographic citation database of the National Library of Medicine (NLM), and MEDLINE is its online counterpart. PubMed is an online database that provides access to citations in MEDLINE as well as those from additional life sciences journals. MEDLINE and PubMed are among the most popular and widely used literature databases for health care professionals. Nearly 4500 journals are indexed in MEDLINE, and even more are indexed in PubMed. Unfortunately, *CJHP* is not currently indexed in either of these popular databases. Of the search tools named above, *CJHP* is currently indexed and cited only by Scirus and IPA; however, the Journal was indexed by MEDLINE and PubMed during the period from 1975 to 1995.

The decision to index a journal in *Index Medicus* and MEDLINE is made by the Director of the NLM, on the basis of scientific policy, as established by the

Board of Regents of the NLM, and a review of the journal's scientific quality, as assessed by the Literature Selection Technical Review Committee (LSTRC) of NLM.<sup>1</sup> Several critical elements are used as criteria to assist in this decision.<sup>1</sup> The first of these is the scope and coverage of the journal. Journals selected for indexing usually contain articles on "core biomedical subjects". Journals with content that does not cover a core biomedical subject, but rather is only peripherally related to biomedicine, may also be indexed, but not if their biomedical content is judged as being adequately covered by other indexed journals. The second criterion is the quality and scientific merit of the content. Validity, importance, originality, and contribution to the coverage of the field are the key factors in assessing content quality. Third, the quality of editorial work is of importance. Indexed journals should exhibit features that contribute to the objectivity, credibility, and quality of their contents. Such features could include aspects of the peer review process, adherence to ethical guidelines, and methods of selecting articles for publication. Production quality, in terms of layout, printing, graphics, and illustrations, is also considered. The journal's audience is the fifth criterion. Journals selected for indexing are intended primarily for health care professionals, including practitioners, researchers, educators, administrators, and students and trainees. Finally, the type of content is important. Journals whose contents consist of one or more of the following are considered for indexing: reports of original research; original clinical observations with analysis or discussion; critical review articles; analysis of the philosophical, ethical, or social aspects of the health professions or biomedical sciences; statistical compilations; descriptions or



evaluations of methods or procedures; and case reports. The same criteria are applied for both English-language and foreign-language journals, although additional consideration may be given to foreign-language journals that provide English abstracts. The highest quality and most useful journals are selected, without regard to geographic location of publication.

Interpretation of these criteria is influenced by the stated purpose of the journal. Four broad categories of journals are suggested<sup>1</sup>: research journals, dedicated primarily to publishing the results of original investigations in the health and biomedical sciences; clinical or practice journals, devoted to documenting the state of current professional practice; review journals, dedicated primarily to publication of review articles; and general or “all-purpose” journals, containing elements of the 3 previous categories.

*CJHP* appears to fulfill most of the stated criteria for journal indexing in *Index Medicus* and MEDLINE and therefore also in PubMed, and it falls into one of the suggested journal categories (general, “all-purpose”). So why is *CJHP* not currently indexed? The specific reasons why *Index Medicus*, MEDLINE, and PubMed stopped indexing *CJHP* in 1995 are not entirely clear. In the past (the 1970s to the 1990s), in addition to the process of review and recommendation by the LSTRC, there was an additional method by which journals could be considered for indexing, known as “special listing”.<sup>\*</sup> Journals in this category could be recommended by 1 of 3 professional organizations: the American Dental Association, the American Nursing Association, or the American Hospital Association (AHA). The AHA recommended journals that dealt with hospital administration and other hospital-related topics, including hospital pharmacy. *CJHP* was apparently indexed in this “special list” category. It seems probable that, in 1995, the AHA recommended

that *CJHP* no longer be indexed, likely because the content of the journal did not coincide with the interests of the AHA, which relate primarily to hospital practice in the United States.<sup>\*</sup> However, the “special list” category of journal indexing has been eliminated, and the LSTRC now makes all decisions on journal selection.<sup>†</sup>

The good news is that *CJHP* has applied for reinstatement of indexing, and this application will be considered by the LSTRC at its meeting in June 2004. While we can make no guarantees, we are hopeful that *CJHP* will once again be indexed by *Index Medicus*, MEDLINE, and PubMed. We will inform *CJHP* readers of the decision about indexing of the journal in these widely used literature databases.

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<sup>†</sup>Sheldon Kotzin, Scientific Review Administrator, Literature Selection Technical Review Committee, National Library of Medicine. Personal communication, January 15, 2004.

#### Reference

1. Journal selection for Index Medicus/MEDLINE<sup>®</sup> [fact sheet]. Bethesda (MD): National Library of Medicine; 2001 Sep 17. Available at: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/jsel.html>. Accessed 2004 Feb 25.

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<sup>\*</sup>Sheldon Kotzin, Scientific Review Administrator, Literature Selection Technical Review Committee, National Library of Medicine. Personal communication, January 8, 2004.

