

The ISI recognizes impact of our journal

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If we believe, like Leonardo da Vinci, that “the most useful science is that the fruit of which is most communicable,” then it follows that communicating the results of science is as important as the science itself, for without such activity society cannot profit from the knowledge and insights generated by scientific and social research. In this light, scientific journals and other channels for the dissemination of research results play a critical role in society’s progress and in the health and welfare of mankind. We can now proudly announce that the *Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública/Pan American Journal of Public Health* (RPSP/PAJPH) has taken an enormous stride toward fulfilling that role even better, for the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, will shortly begin to index the publication in at least two of its bibliographic databases: *Current Contents/Behavioral & Social Sciences* and *Social Sciences Citation Index*. Of the hundreds of thousands of scientific journals that circulate in the world at any given time, only those having the highest impact, as determined by citation analysis, are indexed in the ISI’s databases, with Latin American journals comprising a very small fraction of the total.

The clear acknowledgment, based on objective, measurable criteria, that the RPSP/PAJPH can confidently take its place among the world’s top-ranking scientific journals is proof against the widespread misconception that research from developing countries is, of necessity, second rate. On a practical level, it is also sure to redound in a richer, more dynamic publication and to bring other tangible rewards. Given the academic incentives linked to publication in high-impact journals, the RPSP/PAJPH will appeal to more and better authors. Our paper submission rates, which have already increased substantially over the past few years, will undoubtedly experience another sharp increase in the future, as will the journal’s citation figures and overall impact. But most importantly, inclusion in these highly prestigious international bibliographic databases will mean much greater visibility for the public health research performed in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly throughout the developed world.

We’re all familiar with the fact, by now so widely publicized, that only 5% to 10% of the world’s health research funding is spent on investigating the pressing health problems of low- and middle-income countries, where 90% of the world’s population resides (1, 2). Clearly, science isn’t only about great discoveries and highly complex technological achievements; it is primarily about exploring and understanding the root causes of society’s most common ills and using research results to advantage in an effort to eradicate them. In this regard, authors in developing countries have very important findings to convey to the world’s scientific community, yet they face discouraging setbacks when trying to publish in highly visible international journals. Thus, this special recognition by the ISI is more than just a feather in our cap; it is an event of singular importance for public health professionals in Latin America and the Caribbean who engage in research, despite time constraints and meager resources.

According to a study that looked at trends in scientific publication in developing countries from 1990 through 2000, Latin America showed a much higher proportional increase in the number of scientific publications than the United States and Canada, after correcting for the relative fraction of the gross domestic product invested in science in each geographic area. Other relative indicators of scientific productivity also show that Latin America and other

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developing regions are making increasingly important contributions to science (3). Infrastructural weaknesses notwithstanding, the potential for quality biomedical research is fully present in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in other parts of the developing world. Strengthening that potential is part of the fundamental role of scientific journals, particularly those that, like the RPSP/PAJPH, target developing countries.

There is no substitute for local research designed and carried out by nationals with an in-depth understanding of local conditions, rather than by academicians in foreign institutions with limited insight into the complex social and cultural forces that shape local reality. It thus becomes critically important to build research capacity at the local level and to give local scientists a front row seat in the international scientific arena from which to contribute their share to the mass of scientific evidence needed to approach global health challenges equitably. Aware of the substantial role played by scientific journals in building local research capacity, the editorial staff of the RPSP/PAJPH seeks to help authors from developing countries of Latin America and the Caribbean strengthen their skills in ways that will enable them to meet stringent international standards for scientific publication. This involves providing rigorous peer review and editorial feedback to authors in a constructive, formative spirit, as well as extra guidance to individual authors when required. Furthermore, the journal is unique in offering investigators the opportunity to write in their native language, a practice we encourage to ensure clarity and accuracy in conveying research findings. In addition, submissions from certain priority countries in Latin America and the Caribbean—Bolivia, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua—are actively sought in light of the Pan American Health Organization's interest in promoting the Millennium Development Goals. As a general rule, papers with a regional perspective or whose findings have broad applications are favored over those that are primarily of local interest, which should be submitted to national journals. This reflects our view that our journal is a forum for exchanging information geared toward developing evidence-based health policy on a regional scale.

We wish to seize this happy opportunity to thank all of our collaborators, most especially our peer reviewers and the distinguished members of our Editorial Board, for the fine work and consistent guidance that have helped the journal achieve this distinction. Above all, we thank our authors, who provide the journal's lifeblood. They, more than anyone, are responsible for the accolade we now so proudly celebrate.

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