



Impact factor: do we need it?



Tommaso Castroflorio

When starting the adventure of the Journal of Aligner Orthodontics (JAO), the main question arising among the members of the editorial team was whether it should be a journal for case reports or a research journal. Aligner orthodontics is growing very fast, in both the clinical and research fields. Therefore the answer was: We need a journal providing clinical tips coming from case reports but also a journal supporting research, providing a platform on which research resulting in significant clinical improvements could be shared.

We are living in an era in which clinicians are expected to keep up to date about new technologies, procedures and materials on the basis of the so-called evidence-based approach. This does not mean 'evidence or death': the American Dental Association (ADA) defines the term 'evidence-based dentistry' (EBD) as an approach to oral health care that requires the judicious integration of systematic assessments of clinically relevant scientific evidence, relating the patient's oral and medical condition and history, with the dentist's clinical expertise and the patient's treatment needs and preferences¹. Therefore the ADA definition considers EBD as the connecting point between clinical improvements coming from the research field, patient expectations and clinician skills.

Since the patient's needs/preferences and clinical expertise are subjective and can vary among various providers and populations, relevant scientific evidence is of critical importance. There is perhaps no perfect recipe for optimal

clinical practices, but keeping it evidence-based is probably the clinician's best bet.

For aligner orthodontics, evidence-based approaches are almost invisible, like clear aligners. The main reason is represented by the customisation of the technique. Clear aligner therapy is customised for both the patient and the clinician. For example, think about the possibilities of using or not attachments, class elastics, different attachment shapes or different thicknesses of the aligner materials. After 20 years of pioneering it is time to move into the contemporary medicine era in which the central part of our work is to make good clinical decisions, one patient and one decision at a time. These decisions are complex, best made in the context of a relationship, integrating what we know and learn about the individual as a person and as a patient with an understanding of the biopsychosocial setting in which their story unfolds. We spend our careers learning and refining this art of doctoring. But good clinical decisions require more than bedside wisdom; they require good science².

Good science requires good journals. A measure of the quality of scientific journals is the Impact Factor (IF). The IF is a metric based on the frequency with which the average article in a journal has been cited in a specific year. It is used to measure the importance or rank of a journal by calculating the times its articles are cited. The IF is considered the number-one ranking value for scientific journals. IFs are a benchmark of a journal's reputation and reflect how fre-



quently peer-reviewed journals are cited by other researchers in a particular year. The IF helps to evaluate a journal's relative importance, especially when compared with others in the same field. According to Eugene Garfield, founder of the Institute for Scientific Information, "impact simply reflects the ability of the journals and editors to attract the best paper available"³.

IF can be calculated after completing the minimum of 3 years of publication; for that reason a journal IF cannot be calculated for new journals. The journal with the highest IF is the one that published the most commonly cited articles over a 2-year period. IFs are calculated each year by Thomson Reuters for those journals that it indexes, and are published in Journal Citation Reports (<https://clarivate.com/products/journal-citation-reports/>).

The Journal of Aligner Orthodontics started its journey 1 year ago, collecting high-quality papers. The editorial team is working hard to keep high standards for the accepted manuscripts and one reason is that we want an IF,

and we are looking to the next 2 years as vitally important in the short history of the journal. We need your support to keep JAO as the reference journal for the future of orthodontics, a clear future in which aligners will become more and more important.

Tommaso Castroflorio

References

1. American Dental Association. Policy on Evidence-Based Dentistry. <https://www.ada.org/en/about-the-ada/ada-positions-policies-and-statements/policy-on-evidence-based-dentistry>. Accessed 11 Feb 2019.
2. LeFevre M. From authority- to evidence-based medicine: are clinical practice guidelines moving us forward or backward? *Ann Fam Med* 2017;15:410-412.
3. Garfield E. How can impact factors be improved? *BMJ* 1996;313(7054): 411-413.