



Editorial

Journal Citation Reports 2025: the international landscape of headache journals and the path of *Headache Medicine*

Juliana Ramos de Andrade¹, Raimundo Silva-Néto², Elder Sarmiento³, Caio Simione⁴, Mauro Jurno⁵, Marcelo Moraes Valença¹

¹Federal University of Pernambuco, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil

²Federal University of the Delta do Parnaíba, Parnaíba, Piauí, Brazil

³University Center of Volta Redonda, Volta Redonda, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

⁴Hospital das Clínicas of the University of São Paulo Medical School, São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

⁵Barbacena Medical School, Barbacena, Minas Gerais, Brazil



Juliana Ramos de Andrade
julirandrade@yahoo.com.br

The new edition of the *Journal Citation Reports (JCR) 2025*, released on June 18, 2025, by Clarivate Analytics, presents the updated impact factors of scientific journals indexed in the Web of Science database (1). The JCR remains one of the primary tools used globally to assess the influence and visibility of academic journals. Among the most anticipated data by the scientific community each year, the impact factor remains one of the most widely used indicators by authors, institutions, and funding agencies when evaluating the editorial and scientific relevance of a journal.

The impact factor represents the average number of citations received in a given year by articles published in the two preceding years. For the 2025 edition, it accounts for citations received in 2024 to articles published in 2022 and 2023. Although the calculation is straightforward, the resulting metric reflects a complex combination of factors, including the journal's reach, publication frequency, topic relevance, and the overall quality of its published content.

It is essential to understand that the impact factor should not be interpreted as an absolute measure of quality, nor should it be the sole criterion for scientific evaluation. Nevertheless, its presence in official reports and its widespread use in academic assessments make it a strategic indicator for journals seeking to expand their international presence.

In the field of headache, several journals stand out, including *Cephalalgia*, *Headache: The Journal of Head and Face Pain*, *The Journal of Headache and Pain*, and *Current Pain and Headache Reports*. The latest JCR list reaffirms the prestige of well-established journals such as *Cephalalgia*, *Headache*, and *The Journal of Headache and Pain*, which remain key platforms for disseminating knowledge in this area.

Each of these journals exhibits distinct trends in its impact factor. *Cephalalgia*, the official journal of the *International Headache Society*, reported an adjusted impact factor of 4.6 in the 2025 edition, a slight decrease from 5.0 in 2024. *Headache* maintained a stable impact factor of 4.0, reflecting resilience and consistency. Meanwhile, *The Journal of Headache and Pain*, published by BMC/Springer Nature, achieved a notable increase to 7.9, up from 7.3 in the previous year.

These variations illustrate how editorial context, publication volume, international visibility, and dissemination strategies shape citation levels and influence a journal's position within the JCR rankings.

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Headache Medicine, the official journal of the *Brazilian Headache Society (SBCe)*, acknowledges the importance of such metrics in enhancing editorial strategies and reaffirms its commitment to upholding scientific quality, internationalization, and advancing knowledge in headache research. Since transitioning to English-only publication, the journal has worked to establish itself as a leading voice in Latin America, offering continuous publication, open access, and no article processing charges—an important differentiator when compared to high-impact international journals that often charge substantial fees.

It is worth noting that the rise in impact factor is often associated with increased article processing charges (APCs). Many high-visibility, open-access journals charge authors a few thousands of dollars in publication fees. This reality can exclude researchers from low- and middle-income countries, thereby deepening inequalities in access to scientific publishing. In this context, *Headache Medicine* reaffirms its commitment to equity and the democratization of scientific knowledge by maintaining free access for both authors and readers.

Although not yet indexed in the JCR, *Headache Medicine* is making steady progress. Achieving international indexation is a gradual process that depends on increasing the volume of publications, expanding dissemination across academic networks, and strengthening connections with national and international scientific communities. Active participation from SBCe members and professionals in the headache field is crucial to this advancement.

To strengthen *Headache Medicine* is to enhance the visibility of Brazilian and Latin American research in the global scientific landscape. The latest JCR edition is more than a report of metrics, it is a call to action for us to continue building a space of excellence, inclusivity, and international recognition in headache science.

How a scientific journal can increase its impact factor and the factors associated with a high impact factor

The impact factor of a scientific journal reflects the average number of citations received per paper published in the journal during the previous two years. To increase the impact factor, a journal should adopt strategies focused on quality, visibility, and relevance.

Publishing high-quality and citable content is essential. This includes prioritizing original research, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses, as these are typically more cited. The journal should maintain a selective editorial policy and rigorous peer review process to ensure that only methodologically sound and relevant studies are accepted.

Editorial strategies such as inviting expert-authored reviews, position papers, and consensus statements can enhance citation rates. Publishing editorials and commentaries linked to key research articles also helps increase visibility.

The journal must be indexed in major databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science, and should apply search engine optimization techniques to improve discoverability. International collaboration is another important factor; attracting submissions from a global author base and supporting multicenter studies can broaden the journal's reach and citation potential.

Active dissemination through social media, newsletters, press releases, and conferences is crucial. Authors should be encouraged to promote their own work and share their publications within academic and professional networks. Reducing the time from submission to publication may also contribute to earlier citations. Factors commonly associated with a high impact factor include a high rejection rate, frequent citation of review articles, broad readership, strong reputation of the editorial board, and inclusion in academic and clinical guidelines.

Conclusion

In the pursuit of a high impact factor, journal editors must adhere to strict ethical standards. This includes maintaining self-citation rates within ethically acceptable limits, avoiding the rejection of scientifically sound articles solely because they address rare diseases or niche topics with limited citation potential, and refraining from exerting pressure on authors or editorial board members to cite articles from the same journal inappropriately or out of context. The increasing competition among major scientific journals for higher impact factors appears to be moving against the tide of ethical publishing practices, often discouraging the dissemination of high-quality research simply because it may attract fewer citations. Ultimately, it is science - and the advancement of knowledge - that suffers the consequences of such practices.

References

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Juliana Ramos de Andrade
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5445-8872>
 Raimundo Silva-Néto
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2343-9679>
 Elder Sarmento
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4500-1376>
 Caio Simone
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7118-663X>
 Mauro Jurno
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8743-9395>
 Marcelo Moraes Valença
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0678-3782>