2019

Our Suppression Principles
At the Web of Science Group, we believe in the importance of maintaining the integrity of the scientific record. We remain the only bibliometrics provider to monitor, survey and curate our data to identify anomalies that lead to distorted rankings. We have no doubt that distortion of citations is harmful to the way we make connections between different pieces of research, and the process of credit in science and discovery.

We realize that suppression of a journal from the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) affects publishers, editors, peer reviewers and authors, and we do not take action lightly. The importance of our data and metrics to the research and publishing communities means we have a particular and extraordinary responsibility to interrogate these data ourselves, curate and edit them. We identify the patterns to ensure that our data is as accurate as it can be, but we do not assume motive on behalf any party. Read more about our suppression principles.

Summary
Our team has conducted a detailed review of the 2015-2019 content, citations, authorships and editorial membership of the five journals named in our 2018 Editorial Expression of Concern (below). We found a pattern of highly concentrated referencing among four journals: Nanoscience and Nanotechnology Letters, Journal of Biobased Materials and Bioenergy, Journal of Biomedical Nanotechnology, and Journal of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, and including citations to a fifth journal Bone Research. The result of these citations was a distortion of the Journal Impact Factors of all five titles in 2017, leading to the original Editorial Expression of Concern. In addition, we found continuing distortion in four of these titles in 2018, leading to their suppression from the 2019 JCR.

The three following journals are suppressed from the JCR for citation stacking: Nanoscience and Nanotechnology Letters, Journal of Biobased Materials and Bioenergy, Journal of Biomedical Nanotechnology.

We found no anomaly in the content, citations, or authorships of Bone Research in the years reviewed. Unfortunately, the distortion of the Bone Research metrics, introduced by citation stacking from the journals listed above prevents us from publishing accurate 2018 JCR citation data, and the title will not be listed in the JCR this year.

The Journal of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology did not show evidence of anomalous patterns of citation in 2018 and will not be suppressed.

Similar analysis of year to date 2019 indicated no continuation of the citation anomalies, so that the journals will not be removed from indexing in Web of Science at this time.

More Details
Four journals in 2017, and three in 2018, contained a pattern of citations concentrated to the JIF numerator of each of the other journals in the set:

- Nanoscience and Nanotechnology Letters (2017, 2018)

We will refer to these journals collectively as the Citing Journals.

The four Citing Journals published sets of articles characterized by large numbers of cited references concentrated exclusively to the prior two years of content in Bone Research or one of the other journals in the set under investigation. For some articles in this group, references that contributed to the JIF represented 50% of their total reference list, and over 90% of their references to any content in the prior two years of scholarship.

The references demonstrated additional abnormal characteristics:

- The articles contain few or no references to published works on bone biology and research other than the concentrated citations to Bone Research.
- The references are primarily located in introductory or discussion sections of the papers as generalized, non-specific demonstrations that the subject being discussed in the paper is being actively researched.
- The references appear in bulk, from five to as many as 30 in a single body-text reference.

The majority of over 13,000 authors in the five journals had regular publication patterns. However, a small cluster had large numbers of papers published in more than one of the Citing Journals. Three authors published over 50 papers in one or more of the Citing Journals. These authors were also affiliated with the editorial board of one or more of the Citing Journals. Finally, each had one or more highly cited papers in Bone Research that appear in that year’s JIF denominator as citable items.

Overlapped editorial boards and repeated authorship among a subset of the journals contributed to the magnification of the JIFs.

The net result of these actions has been a gross distortion of the JIF of Bone Research, and each of the Citing Journals, and elevated citation rates for groups of individual articles authored or co-authored by members of the editorial management of the Citing Journals.

We have communicated with the affected publishers throughout and have been assured of their cooperation and internal review of the matters described to them.

2018

It has come to the attention of the editorial and management team for the Journal Citation Reports that there has been a problematic pattern of citations amongst the journals Nanoscience and Nanotechnology Letters, Journal of Biobased Materials and Bioenergy, Journal of Biomedical Nanotechnology and Journal of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology (all published by American Scientific Publishers), and including a particular concentration of citations to the journal Bone Research (published by Springer Nature, in partnership with the West China School of Stomatology, Sichuan University, and the International Chinese Musculoskeletal Research Society).

The possibility of manipulation of citation metrics is a serious matter, and Clarivate Analytics remains the only bibliometrics provider to monitor, survey and curate our data to identify anomalies that lead to distorted rankings.

We have initiated a process of investigation of the journals named above, along with affiliated publications. When we have completed a thorough review, we will take any appropriate action; this may result in one or more journals being removed from the JCR, with a possible further action of removal from indexing in Web of Science.

Because these citations have affected the published metrics for several journals, Clarivate Analytics is publishing this Editorial Expression of Concern to alert our users to this information.
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