

# ACCDON



**Prof. Michael Sarr is the J.C. Masson Professor Emeritus of Surgery at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota. After finishing his surgery training at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1984 and 2 fellowships in experimental surgery, he was on staff for 30 years in the Division of General and GI Surgery, which he chaired for 10 years. Aside from an NIH-funded laboratory for 25 years in basic GI Physiology, his clinical interests have been in pancreatic surgery, bariatric surgery, and abdominal wall reconstruction. He is member of most of the General and GI surgical associations and has been president of the SSAT and the International Society of Surgery. His bibliography includes over 650 peer-reviewed publications and 13 separate books. Prof. Sarr has been and remains one of the 2 co-editors of the journal SURGERY for 20 years. Prof. Sarr is a senior scientific editor at Accdon-LetPub.**

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# Addressing the Concerns of International (Chinese) Editors and Authors

Michael G Sarr MD  
Editor of the journal “SURGERY”  
(Impact Factor 3.9)

 A close-up photograph of a white laptop keyboard with a black pen resting on it. The keys for 'H', 'N', and 'B' are visible. The background is a warm orange gradient.

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- I will try to focus this presentation whenever possible **to you as Chinese editors and toward the end to you as Chinese authors,** but the points I raise are pertinent to other countries which have similar difficulties with submitting a paper to an English-speaking journal:

Japan, Korea, France, Italy, middle East, Russia, etc!

# Michael G Sarr MD--- about me



I am 67 years old

A recently retired general abdominal surgeon

Editor of the journal SURGERY for 20 years

Academic journal (Impact Factor 3.9)

Mixture of clinical and research-oriented papers

My Career- 50% research Gastrointestinal physiology

50% Clinical practice/research

Publications >700, 12 books

# OUTLINE OF SESSION

## Your Concerns as International Editors

1. What is the decision-making process for the editor?
2. Usual organization of Western journals
3. What are the newest trends for editors (and publishers) in scientific publishing
4. How can we as editors increase the IMPACT FACTOR for our journals
5. What is the best metric for judging the success of a journal (impact factor or something else?)

# OUTLINE OF SESSION

Additional topics I think will be of interest for all of you as International Authors\*

- 1. Is there any International ( and specifically Chinese) bias ?**
2. Inappropriate submissions to journals
3. RCTS ( randomized control trials)
4. Meta-analyses, systematic reviews
5. Scientific editing services, not just an “English editor”
6. Electronic submissions are too easy!

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**\* I will only address #s 1 and 5**

## WHAT IS THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDITORS?

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- The usual process for the Editor is to first “look over” the submission to determine if it is good enough to have it reviewed

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  - if yes** , the goal is to have at least 2 (or more) reviewers ; many journals depending on their reputation may ask 6 people to review it hoping that at least 2 will agree to review it

# WHAT IS THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDITORS

## Potential Problems Currently

1. Reviewer fatigue/non-interest/lack of recognized benefit

- **THIS HAS BECOME A VERY REAL PROBLEM!**

Every one is more and more busy

Much more of a problem with the younger generation who may not be as interested in career promotion via reviewing articles

2. RESULT--- editors ask need to ask more reviewers than needed

# WHAT IS THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDITORS

- Reviewers are generally given up to 2 weeks to review it with a reminder sent at 1 week
- If less than 2 reviewers agree, then another 2 week cycle starts (thus it may take a full month or more to get the paper reviewed)
- Then the editor reviews the reviewers comments

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\* Some journals want more than two reviewers

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**Thus, the minimal time for a submission to be reviewed and the editor to respond is about 1 month, more realistically it is 6 to 8 weeks**

# WHAT IS THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDITORS

IF A REVISION IS ASKED OF THE AUTHOR

The Editor's revision letter to the author should ask for a response to **ALL** the questions, criticisms, concerns, and maybe even some reviewer's comments on the topic. The Editor may/should also ask questions

1. The editor's letter might ask for more experiments or analyses
2. As the author, you must answer **EVERY QUESTION in the reviews and from the Editor**

# Organization of a journal

# ORGANIZATION OF A JOURNAL-2

## 1. EDITOR (OR CO-EDITORS)

Associate or Section Editors-varies with the journal

Guest editor for a special section

Often an associate editor for social media

## 2. Editorial board

1. often famous names for the “attraction” value

2. valued expert reviewers

3. Input from the editorial board is variable as well

May never meet as a whole

May meet once or twice a year

# ORGANIZATION OF A JOURNAL-2

Editorial Boards--used differently by many journals

1. some journals use the board solely for reviewing articles
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- 4. I HAVE BEEN ON ALL OF THESE TYPES OF EDITORIAL BOARDS**

# ORGANIZATION OF A JOURNAL-2

For my journal **SURGERY**

the editorial board meets twice a year face to face for the following:

updates on the success of the journal (number of submissions, impact factor, type of articles  
feedback to authors on how they are doing with respect to the other board members (turn around time of their reviews, number of articles they decline to review, etc

**BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY**

WE USE THE EDITORIAL BOARD TO DISCUSS

1. Problems they see with the journal
2. Major changes we want to make
3. Ideas for improvement of the journal
4. Opinions on new topics or sections in the journal
5. Controversial submissions

# CURRENT TRENDS IN PUBLISHING

## THE EDITORS' VIEW

Twitter

the **latest hot topic** with our younger generation

Tweet/re-Tweet articles of interest

how many?

how often?

use of visual abstracts?

who selects them?

How to keep track of the number of followers?

**You ALL Know this**

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**BUT HOW MANY KNOW ALTMETRICS?**

## Altmetrics Attention Score

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- This scoring system is NOT specific for Medicine **AND**

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- This scoring system is NOT specific for Medicine **AND**
- **The method of scoring is largely qualitative and uses weighted evaluations of the type of source of notice**

## EXAMPLE OF Altmetrics Attention Scoring

- Weighted sources of “visibility” are as follows:
- 8 points      Newspaper, press release
- 5 points      blogs
- 1 point      Twitter, Google
- 0.85 points   re-Tweet
- 3 points      Wikipedia
- 0.25 points   You Tube, Facebook,

## Altmetrics Attention Score

- Altmetrics is advertised as **“Who is talking about your research ”**

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SO WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

## Altmetrics Attention Score

- **An example of a score**

Picked up by 8 news outlets

Blogged by 26

Tweeted by 142

On 22 Facebook pages

Referenced in 1 Wikipedia page

Mentioned in 3 Google +posts

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# SO WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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THIS IS AN ARTIFICIAL SCORE OF  
VISIBILITY IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA

**A PRODUCT OF OUR CURRENT  
SOCIETY**

# IMPACT FACTOR

# Impact factor-4

## HOW TO IMPROVE THE IMPACT FACTOR OF A JOURNAL?

1. Publish RCTs
2. Publish Meta-analyses and Systematic reviews
3. Publish review articles on topics of broad interest
4. Publish Guidelines from recognized sources

# Impact factor-4

## HOW TO IMPROVE THE IMPACT FACTOR OF A JOURNAL?

5. Avoid case reports or lump them all in one title “Case Reports”
6. Quote papers from prior articles in the same journal  
(it is discouraged to ask authors to do this!)

# Impact factor-4

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**(it is discouraged to ask authors to do this!)**
7. {Avoid publishing abstracts from meetings}
8. {Minimize editorials unless they directly follow articles without a new page and no separate line in the table of contents}

**These blue types should not be counted but on occasion they are misinterpreted and counted**

# WHAT IS THE BEST METRIC FOR JUDGING A JOURNAL?-5

Impact factor (IF)

number of citations for articles in that journal in the previous 2 years  
divided by total number of publications

5- year impact factor

Number of hits

Number of downloads

H-5 index

rank the total number of papers with their number of citations each  
for instance a journal has 6 publications

A 10

B 8

C 5

D 4

E 3

F 0

H is the number where the ranking is greater than or equal  
to the number of citations

# CURRENT TRENDS IN PUBLISHING-6

- Online Journal Clubs-- discuss one or more papers online for anyone to ask questions, either in real time OR for a limited period of time
- Podcasts-- recorded “lectures” on related topics or a discussion by an author of their paper
- Short 3 to 8 minute, author-based discussion of their paper **BUT WITH SLIDES**

## Visual Abstracts or visual graphs\*

Probably the hottest topic now

Amenable to Tweeting via Twitter

One “page” visual summary or **“VIEW”** of the findings

\* Elsevier term

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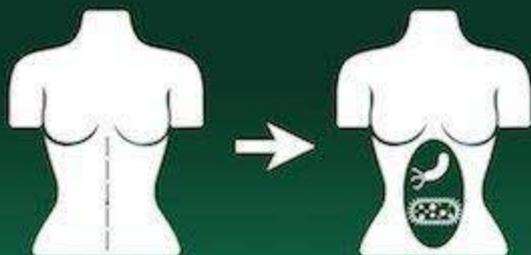
**BUT** this “summary” is with tables, graphs, figures, photos, etc but with minimal text

This appeals to a more visually-oriented society interested in short “visual bites” similar to the “sound bites” of television news and politicians,

# Open abdomen with vacuum-assisted wound closure and mesh-mediated fascial traction in patients with complicated diffuse secondary peritonitis

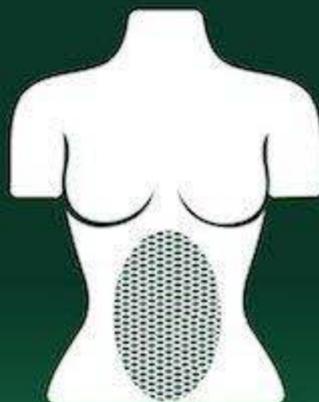
## BACKGROUND

Open abdomen has been used increasingly to treat peritonitis



Data regarding safety and efficacy are scarce

## METHODS



41 patients with complicated diffuse peritonitis were treated using open abdomen with VAC + mesh

## RESULTS



7% enteroatmospheric fistula rate



92% delayed primary fascial closure rate (among survivors)



29% 90-day mortality

The Journal of  
**Trauma and  
Acute Care Surgery**

Tolonen et al  
*J Trauma Acute Care Surg*  
March 23, 2017 [Epub ahead of print]

## Visual Abstracts

MINIMAL DATA—not really scientific

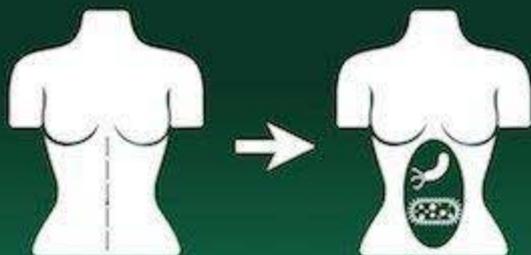
ALMOST COMPLETELY VISUAL

A SNAPSHOT VIEW OF THE PAPER

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# OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Additional topics of interest to you as BOTH international **editors** and **authors**

1. Writing in English, word usage, grammar
2. Ethical concerns, especially in animal and human research
3. Institutional Review Boards (Human Research)  
informed consent
4. Ethics Committees
5. Animal Care Committees  
appropriate care and use of animals for research

# ?BIAS AGAINST INTERNATIONAL AUTHORS?

1. Many international authors **believe there is upfront bias** by editors and reviewers
  - a. when their papers are not reviewed
  - b. when they get what they consider to be a biased review
  - c. when they are told that the submission is unsatisfactory **and not well written or the grammar is unsatisfactory**

# ?BIAS AGAINST INTERNATIONAL AUTHORS?

2. **YES** this type of bias does occur in some journals- but certainly **NOT MOST JOURNALS!**

a. bias is usually in smaller, less important, or “national” journals and is

b. often out of ignorance, but occasionally for political reasons

3. **HOWEVER**, most high impact top shelf journals **ENCOURAGE** international submissions and review them for the underling science, **not** only for the grammar and writing

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# ?BIAS AGAINST INTERNATIONAL AUTHORS?

- English –speaking journals expect the submission to be readable, precise, and scientifically correct
- **Most all journals** will accept submissions that are a honest attempt to make the English appropriate, --- **BUT** when a submission is not readable and the grammar , spelling, and word usage is especially bad , the journal will usually **send it back either for revision of rejection**

- This is a major problem , especially for the Asian countries which use characters for their native language!

**I THINK YOU WILL  
ALL AGREE**

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In Science, we have a phrase

**YOU ARE WHAT YOU WRITE**

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### YOU ARE WHAT YOU WRITE

The readership of the article will judge what you did and reported BY WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE ARTICLE, no matter what you “meant to say”

Also, editors and reviewers will also judge **how careful** you are as a scientist by **how careful** you are with your writing

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The readership of the article will judge what you did and reported BY WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE ARTICLE, no matter what you “meant to say”

Also editors and reviewers will also judge **how careful** you are as a scientist by **how careful** you are with your writing **therefore the writing, grammar, spelling, and word usage IS VERY IMPORTANT!**

## Why is this a problem?

- .
- 1. Imagine yourselves reading a submission in Chinese characters where the characters are incorrect
- 2. Remember, the reviewers give their time for free and having to try to interpret what the author said can be very difficult--- most reviewers really **do** try to help the authors, but of course **SOME DO NOT**

## Why is this a problem?

4. In my journal SURGERY, when describing an operation or a complicated scientific method, inappropriate words can make the interpretation very, very difficult or even impossible

This is especially obvious when the author uses a non-scientific editor who may speak English or even teach English **but is not familiar with scientific writing!**

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**Or worse yet STATISTICS**

## THINGS TO AVOID

1. Asking an English teacher to edit it even if he or she is a native English-speaking teacher
2. Asking a colleague whose English is “better” than yours but still not very good
3. Sending it to a “friend” in the US asking them to edit it (often the “editing” by your “friend” will be too hurried, because they are busy, and because it is not their work, they may/will not spend the time necessary-  
**sorry but unfortunately that is the way of the world today!**

## Possible solutions

- ▶ Use a “scientific” editing service

This can be expensive!

Choose the service well – some of them are not good and charge too much

Some journals offer an editing service (**but not for free!**)

Pick an editing service that fits your need: such as oriented for medicine, the sciences, education, etc

## Possible solutions

Ask what they offer

Do they also do a scientific editing of the topic by a scientist who knows the field who provides suggestions to improve the paper? OR

**Do they just edit the scientific words and grammar?**

DO they check the references for accuracy?

Will they review the editor's response and the reviewers response?

Will they format the submission for that journal?

- **PLEASE I DO NOT MEAN TO INSULT YOU  
WITH WHAT I AM GOING TO SAY NEXT!**

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**Just like these last two words!** 

# COMMON PITFALLS IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

## Authorship

a). Be careful of too many authors

whenever there are >6 authors, the EDITOR will question whether all the authors meet the COPE\* standards for authorship: **all of the following are necessary**

1. substantial contributions to the concept, design, acquisition of data, analysis, or interpretation
2. drafting or revising the critical intellectual content
3. final approval of submission
4. **accountability for** and assurance of integrity of the work

\*COPE- Committee on Publication Ethics

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**DIFFICULT PROBLEM IN CHINA, JAPAN, KOREA!**

- This is a topic of high visibility
  - Informed Consent
  - Approval by the Institutional Review Board
  - for human studies
  - Ethics

## Informed Consent

Spend some time on emphasizing the following:

1. the patients were not forced to consent
2. the patients understood that it was a research study and that there were risks
3. address confidentiality of their personal data
4. consider including a copy of the consent form with the official institutional stamp -- although this is **NOT** required in most journals, it will assure the editor of the appropriateness and completeness of the consent form

## APPROVAL BY the Institutional Review Board (IRB)

**1. ALL HUMAN STUDIES IN AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING JOURNAL WILL REQUIRE THIS!**

2. Consider including a copy of the IRB approval

3. Provide the date approved

Concerns-- **WHY”?**

**TOPICS**--Transplantation of an organ, risks, informed consent, ethics

**WE ADDRESSED THIS WITH THE AUTHOR BY**

- a. asking for the actual consent forms form both the patient and the family ( with an official institutional stamp)
- b. asking for IRB approval AND approval by the hospital ethics committee (with an official institutional stamp)

- All animal studies in the US and most all Western countries **require** approval by an Animal Care and Use committee **before publication!**
  1. to assure the humane treatment of the research animals, and
  2. to prevent any animal suffering regardless of the type of animal –mice, dogs, cows, primates etc!

# SCIENTIFIC MISCONDUCT

- Plagiarism
- Dual submission
- False data
- Copying another person's published work

# PLAGIARISM IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

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when a writer **deliberately** uses someone else's\* language, ideas, or other original material without (fully) acknowledging the source

\* If the journal owns the copyright, reproducing **EVEN YOUR OWN WORDS** without acknowledging the source is still **plagiarism**

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The editor’s response should be **NO THE COPYRIGHT IS HELD BY AND OWNED BY THE PUBLISHER!!!!** so put the phrase in quotes and cite the reference

## How to deal with Plagiarism

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Possible publication of the misconduct with the name and institution of the author!

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BUT if an entire paragraph is copied from the authors' previous work, then either it should be in quotes or the sentences written with different words

If the entire paragraph is from another author's work, then it is **NOT ACCEPTABLE!** the author should be disciplined and made to rewrite it

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- **IT IS THE JOURNAL'S RESPONSIBILITY TO DEAL WITH THIS MISCONDUCT**  
**FULLY AND IMMEDIATELY**

# FALSE (FACTITIOUS) DATA

- Reporting of data or experiments that were never done **THIS IS THE MOST EGREGIOUS SCIENTIFIC MISCONDUCT\***

**\* This behavior is bad for the institution and for science as a whole**

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- **This situation requires active, aggressive intervention**

Severe immediate discipline of the author

Communication with the institution of origin—  
either the department chair or the scientific  
misconduct committee **reporting the misconduct**

Banning the author from submitting any other  
paper to the journal **(maybe forever!)**

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**THIS IS REALLY BAD FOR THE INSTITUTION AND THE DEPARTMENT**

**THE AUTHOR(S) MAY/SHOULD BE DISHONORED FOR LIFE**

# COPYING OF ANOTHER PERSON'S WORK

- This is similar to False data and represents **unacceptable scientific misconduct**
- **The disciplinary action is similar to that of false data**

# OPEN ACCESS ARTICLES

Great idea! I think we would all agree that in theory, science should be “free”

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**BUT WHO PAYS FOR THE  
PUBLISHING OF THE  
ARTICLE?**

# OPEN ACCESS ARTICLES

**Some journals make one or two articles free to the public ( the readers who do not have electronic access to the journal)**

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**(But it is expensive!)**

# OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

- Many many many open access journals are being “developed”
- The quality of most all these journals is **BAD!**
  - no reviewers used**
  - inexperienced or not qualified editors**
  - no editorial board**
  - money-making companies with NO scientific background**
  - rapid publication ( even within 2 weeks!)**

# OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

- The first open access journals were funded by philanthropic organizations who believed in the concept of free and open access to science
- However the funding by these philanthropic organizations was limited and many entrepreneurs recognized a money-making possibility **BECAUSE IT WAS ALL DONE ONLINE (low cost)**

# OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

- Currently, most of these OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS charge about \$1000 to \$2000 to have your article published electronically
- AND the more they publish, the more money they make!

What does the future hold with online open access publishing?

**Time will tell**

**We strive to level the playing field for clients across the globe.**



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*Office in Shanghai, China*

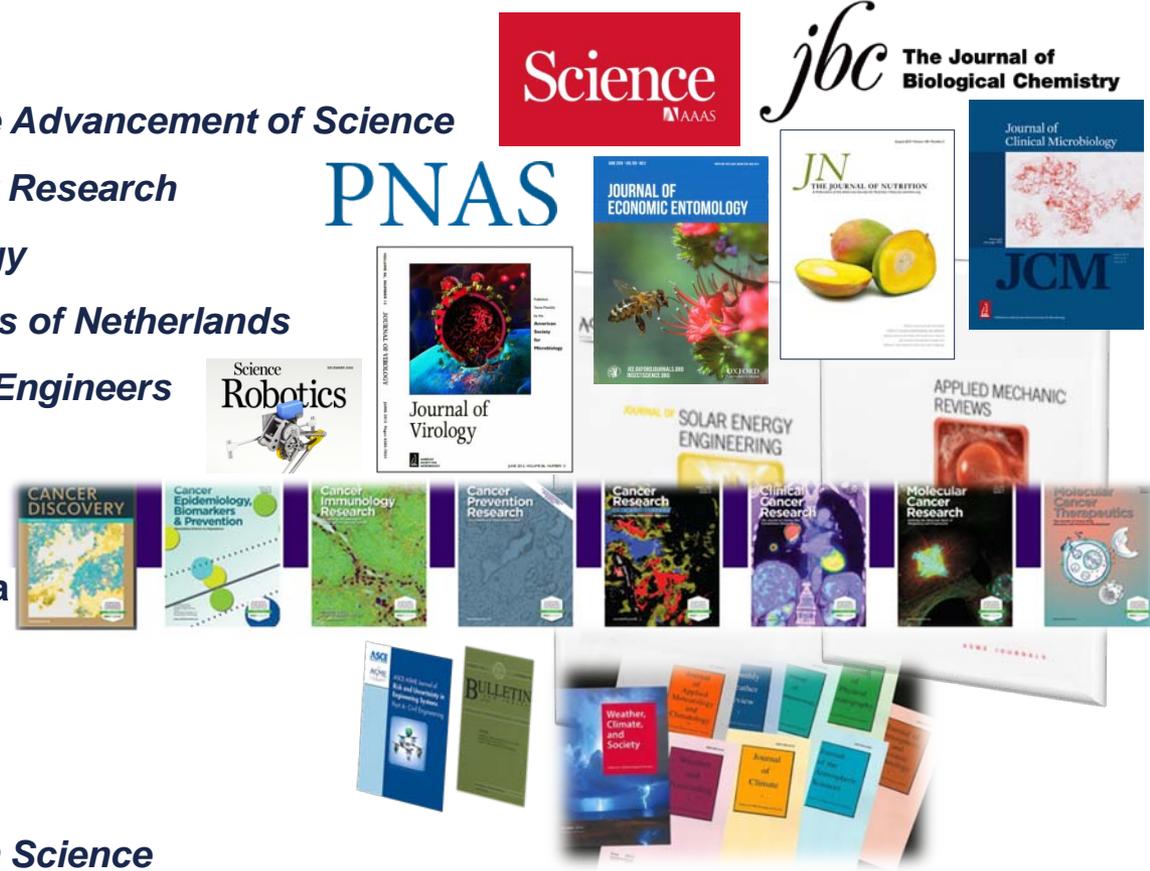
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