

Abstract!

J.W.M. van der Meer, A.F.H. Stalenhoef, P. Smits, Th. Thien

ABSTRACT

With the availability of electronic databases, it has become crucial to provide informative abstracts to published papers. Articles published without an abstract run a great risk of being neglected by readers and authors. The Netherlands Journal of Medicine will provide informative abstracts of all future papers, including editorials and letters.

Many published articles, not only in this Journal but in almost any journal, are never cited and perhaps never read. For today's biomedical scientists, including clinical investigators, it is no longer only pertinent to publish, but also to be cited. To judge the scientific quality and esteem of investigators, various methods have been proposed, but nowadays citation is often assessed in addition to the number of publications and the impact of the journals in which they have appeared.

With the advent of the electronic era, citation habits are rapidly changing. This was recently pointed out quite clearly by Wentz in a letter to the editor of the *Lancet*.¹ He points to what he calls the FUTON bias. The acronym stands for 'full text on the net'.

For obvious reasons, papers not available as full text are less likely to be cited in related articles and reviews by other authors than those that are available. According to Wentz this leads to citation bias, similar to the language bias.² The situation is worse for papers classified as NAA (no abstract available). Such papers, which are not rare, run a great risk of being completely neglected by readers and authors.

What does this mean for The Netherlands Journal of Medicine?

First of all, since the change of the publisher,³ an electronic version of the journal is not yet available, but under construction. The abstracts are, however, accessible through electronic databases such as Pubmed. Therefore, it is imperative for us as editors to ask contributors to provide informative abstracts, preferably in a structured form. Sentences like: 'the details are discussed' are not acceptable, not even in case reports. In addition, we will provide abstracts of every editorial (including this one), comment, review and letter in order to create maximal chances of being detected by those who search the literature.

REFERENCES

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3. Meer JWM van der. Editorial. *Neth J Med* 2002;60:1:3.