Importance of Physical Therapy Grows
Richard W Bohannon

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conjunction with other data, we doubt whether they are really clinically useful. We believe that all too often there is confusion between what is in widespread use and what really is clinically useful.

The letter clarifying the positions of Malone, Blackburn, and Wallace states that their original article was based on their experiences with several thousand patients. In their letter they acknowledge that these were empirical data. For further judgement of the credibility of the observations shared in that paper, it would have been useful to have seen a more complete description of their experiences. Did they actually use a lower percentage and find too many injuries? Did they ever use a higher percentage and find that it took too long to return to competition?

We find it hard to believe that a measurement so error ridden as an isokinetic percentage can really represent meaningful data. However, we reserve the right to be proven wrong. We acknowledge, as did our critics, that we live in a flawed world. But we also apply that observation to the entire world and wonder why we should believe that undocumented clinical observations are less flawed than is scientific evidence. We are not suggesting that clinicians stop using everything that has some flaw. We are stating firmly that we need to investigate measurements so that we know the error associated with them, because then, and only then, will the clinician really know if the test helps or hinders treatment planning.

The issue is not whether it is easier to be critical than to be correct. The issue is how we can engage in a dialogue and a process that will improve the quality of patient care through the development of more meaningful measurement techniques. We thank Dr. Malone, Mr. Blackburn, and Mr. Wallace for their contribution to that dialogue.

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IMPACT OF PHYSICAL THERAPY GROWS

To the Editor:

Those who read, contribute to the editorial process, and submit contributions to a journal such as Physical Therapy may be interested in the importance of the journal relative to other journals. One measure of such importance is a journal's impact factor. The measure is documented yearly in the Journal Citation Reports of Science Citation Index.1 It indicates the frequency with which citable items (primarily articles) of different journals are cited (referenced) by authors publishing in that year. Because some journals may include more citable items per year than others, the impact factor for a journal is calculated in relation to the number of citable items published in that journal.

Lister made reference in 19862 to the growing impact factor of Physical Therapy. I submit this letter to provide the readership with information regarding the present impact factor of Physical Therapy and to put the increase in this impact factor into perspective. As no other physical therapy journal is indexed by Science Citation Index, the impact factor of Physical Therapy cannot be put into perspective relevant to other physical therapy journals. It can be compared, however, with journals related to rehabilitation.

The Table documents the impact factor of Physical Therapy and three other journals relevant to rehabilitation. Although the 1986 impact factor of Physical Therapy is high relative to the other journals, the impact factor of Physical Therapy is significantly lower over six years than that of the other three journals (F = 7.525, p = .003). The Figure graphs the impact factor of Physical Therapy from 1981 to 1986. During the six years, the impact factor of Physical Therapy increased in a linear fashion (r = .998, impact factor = .110 × year = 2.1787). The slope of impact factor/year is significantly different from 0. Systematic increases in the impact factor of the other three journals (American Journal of Physical Medicine, Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and Scandinavian Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine) are not demonstrated by statistical analysis.

This information suggests that those who publish in refereed journals are holding Physical Therapy in a progressively higher position as a source of important information. This is particularly true when Physical Therapy is compared with other journals related to rehabilitation. Nevertheless, with a 1986 impact factor of .59, Physical Therapy remains and will undoubtedly continue to remain of highly limited general importance compared with such journals as Lancet (1986 impact factor = 12.85) and New England Journal of Medicine (1986 impact factor = 17.75).

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REFERENCES


Table. Comparison of Impact Factors of Physical Therapy and Three Other Journals with Similar Content

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<td>Am J Phys Med</td>
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<td>Scand J Rehabil Med</td>
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Figure. Impact factor of Physical Therapy from 1981 to 1986.