



DNA Working Group

Steering Committee

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Journal Impact Factor (JIF) for Forensic Science International: Genetics

Dear Madame,

This letter is provided on behalf of the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI). This group represents case-working laboratories throughout Europe, with 72 member organisations in 39 nations.

"The European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI) was founded in 1995 with the purpose of improving the mutual exchange of information in the field of forensic science. This, as well as improving the quality of forensic science delivery in Europe have become the main issues of the network. Besides the general work in the fields of quality and competence management, research and development and education and training, different forensic expertise are dealt with by 17 different Expert Working Groups. ENFSI therefore has been recognized as the monopoly organization in the field of forensic science by the European Commission."

We write in relation to the decision of Clarivate to suppress a Journal Impact Factor (JIF) for *Forensic Science International: Genetics*. We are aware that many other groups world-wide have written to Clarivate to ask for a reversal of this decision. The purpose of this letter is to add to the voice of forensic geneticists worldwide.

We reiterate the main causes of concern below:

- 1) FSI Genetics is universally recognised as the premier publication in our field. It is the publication of first-choice for researchers in our field. As such, it has a high rejection rate since only the highest quality submissions are published.
- 2) The publications are used not only for research purposes, but also for case-work and court-reporting purposes in order to support both prosecutions and defence of accused individuals.

- 3) Forensic genetics is a small field where funding-levels are low compared to main-stream academia. Because there are relatively few scientists actively researching in our highly specialised field, the resulting publications are accommodated by a single high-profile journal – our field cannot be compared to 'stem-cell research' where there are numerous possibilities to publish.
- 4) It is clear that if there is only one primary journal and relatively few researchers, then the self-citation rate will be high, since there are no alternative high-profile publications for them to publish in.
 - a. Therefore, the decision to suppress the JIF of FSI:Genetics is misplaced. The 'self-citation' criterion is only applicable to much larger fields of science where there are multiple high-profile journals that accept publications. It cannot apply to fields where there is only one major journal.
- 5) The lack of an impact factor for FSI:Genetics will adversely affect chances for project funding and career development in forensic genetics. In turn this will have a negative effect on the development of new technology and interpretation methods in our field, thereby affecting presentations at court and compromising efforts to build a safer society.
- 6) It is concerning that the decision to suppress JIF was carried out without consultation with the editor of FSI: Genetics. The decision-making process shows lack of transparency and absence of peer-review. There is a lack of appreciation of the challenges faced by small research fields.

The ENFSI DNA Expert Working Group is united in its request to Clarivate to reverse their unjustifiable decision to suppress the JIF of FSI: Genetics and look forward to receiving a response to our request.

Dr. Sander Kneppers



DNA Expert Working Group
Chairman

Dr. Michael Bovens



ENFSI chairman