

Manifest of the Forensic Genetics Community on the suppression of Forensic Science International: Genetics from JCR

The authors and subscribers of this letter are agents from academic institutions, justice and police organizations, or non-criminalistic laboratories, from the public or private sector, working in the field of forensic genetics, including both members and non-members of the International Society for Forensic Genetics. Subscriptions were gathered from August 18 to 26, 2020, following the list of subscribers at the end of the text.

In late July of 2020 we were informed that Clarivate™ decided to suppress Forensic Science International – Genetics (Forensic Sci. Int. Genet.) from the Web of Science Journal Citation Reports™ (JCR), disqualifying the journal from having its 2019 Journal Impact Factor (JIF). This was an absolutely unexpected situation for readers and authors, as Forensic Sci. Int. Genet. had JIF attributed every year after its launching (2007). To the best of our knowledge, no warning was previously made, at least publicly, catching an entire community off-guard. Clarivate™ supports their decision with the high proportion of self-citations. From the JCR Suppression Policy Manual available online it is not clear what Clarivate™ considers a problematic self-cite rate, but it is worth to note that in 2019, the proportion of self-cites of Forensic Sci. Int. Genet. was the lowest since 2014, according to JCR data.

The formula used to calculate JIF does not discriminate between self- from non-self-citations, and it is not unreasonable to think that Editors may promote self-cites to artificially increase the metric. Nevertheless, it cannot be blindly assumed that a high proportion of self-cites relies on a scheme to cheat the system. This is especially sensitive in the case of “niche” journals as Forensic Sci. Int. Genet., specialized in the tight field of forensic genetics. Forensic Sci. Int. Genet. belongs to two JCR categories: “Genetics & Hereditary” and “Medicine, Legal”. Regarding the first category, the fragile position of Forensic Sci. Int. Genet. is perfectly understandable, as most journals in the category concern genetics and disease, hence it is difficult for forensics to be a research area of interest. Indeed, this is likely to be the situation of any “niche” journal whenever considered in a broader category. On the other hand, it is not necessary to take a deep look into the “Medicine, Legal” category to understand the huge impact that Forensic Sci. Int. Genet. has on the field. For example, considering its JIF without self-citations—it remains greater than the global JIF (with self-citations) of the journals in the same category in the scope of which forensic genetics is included.

Forensic Sci. Int. Genet. is the official journal of the International Society for Forensic Genetics (ISFG), which represents more than 1,400 members from over 60 countries, comprising 12 working groups, 10 of which instituted by language: Arabian, Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish and Spanish and Portuguese. Members are typically involved in academic institutions, criminal justice, police organizations, and non-criminal laboratories, which promotes an unparalleled level of proximity and exchange of ideas between scientific researchers and practitioners in the field. All ISFG members receive a complimentary subscription (print and online version) of the journal, making *Forensic Sci. Int. Genet.* an appealing place for researchers to disseminate their results as the interest of the audience is somewhat granted. This does not occur when results of such a specific topic are published in generalist journals, as the dissemination, mainly among practitioners, is difficult to achieve. Indeed, the most important results achieved in forensic genetics in the last years have been published in the only specialized journal in the area. Also, the quantity of *Forensic Sci. Int. Genet.* communications is impressive considering its narrow scope—a total of 376 documents were published in 2017 and 2018. This justifies the high proportion of the journal self-citations, as it would be hard to understand if it occurred differently. Indeed, many of us are authors and/or reviewers of *Forensic Sci. Int. Genet.* and we can testify not only to the hard and demanding peer review process, but also to the absence of promotion of self-citations by the editorial board.

We are all aware that many funding agencies worldwide rely on the principle of only considering JCR-indexed journals when evaluating a project or personal grant proposal. Suppression of a journal, regarding the previous year and without any kind of warning, is an extremely unfair and detrimental situation for researchers who worked hard to publish their work in the journal with the most impact in the area, with the dangerous situation regarding JCR unknown to them. Clarivate™ seems to be aware of part of the consequences of journal suppression, as stated in their website (accessed 17 August 2020): “We realize that suppression of a journal from the Web of Science Journal Citation Reports™ (JCR) affects publishers, authors, editors and peer reviewers; we do not take this action lightly.” What Clarivate™ does not seem to be aware of is that the application of blind methodologies to “niche” journals and small research areas is not only damaging for “publishers, authors, editors and peer reviewers” but also for the research area itself. Indeed, the loss of competitive funding for the research area is an immediate consequence due to the severed curriculum vitae of the applicants. This necessarily leads to a delay on the scientific research development and translation, which will have an impact in the life and well-being of citizens worldwide. This is particularly true in the case of forensic genetics, where research is rapidly translated into practice. Developments in this field provide valuable

tools for law enforcement and fight against crime. Going some years into the past, the investigation of the terrorist attacks in 2001 in the USA and in 2004 in Spain, or coming back to very recent days, the identification of some of the 43 students that went missing in Ayotzinapa, Mexico, are just three striking publicly-known examples of the many cases where advances in the field were applied. Forensic genetics also plays a fundamental role in the identification of missing persons as a result of armed conflicts and violations of human rights, as well as in the clarification and assertion of the veracity of historical facts. Besides these, cutting-edge research on forensic genetics is applied in a daily basis on the investigation of crimes related to sexual assault, robbery, aggression or homicide, as well as in civil kinship assessments. Also, recent scientific advances regarding non-human material have been providing new tools for law enforcement's fight against wildlife crimes, bioterrorism, or food fraud, to cite just a few examples. Being the only journal specialized in forensic genetics, most of these theoretical advances, methodologies, and case reports have been, as expected, published in *Forensic Sci. Int. Genet.* Indeed, among other consequences, a disinvestment in the area of forensic genetics may call into question goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development from United Nations: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>, regarding the promotion of a peaceful society.

All in all, the field of the forensic genetics will be greatly affected by the suppression of the society journal from the JCR. *Forensic Sci. Int. Genet.* is the journal used by the International Society and its many working groups to publish guidelines for best practices in the field and important recommendations regarding the markers, methodologies and ethical principles, important to keep professionals up to date and using cutting-edge practices when resolving cases. Therefore, the consequences of this decision will permeate through the boundaries of science itself and will have a negative impact in our life in society.

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| 232 | Lidia | Vidal rioja | Instituto Multidisciplinario Biología Celular -IMBICE- | Director: Servicio Identificación Genética | Argentina |
| 233 | Lisa | Dierig | Institute of Legal Medicine Ulm | - | Germany |
| 234 | Lisandro | Laborde | Laboratorio de Análisis Comparativo de ADN de la Suprema Corte de Justicia de la provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina | Jefe de Laboratorio | Argentina |
| 235 | Loredana | Buscemi | Polytechnic University of the Marche | PRESIDENT OF GeFI (Italian Forensic Genetics group) | Italy |
| 236 | Lorenzo | Franceschetti | Università degli Studi di Brescia | Ph.D student | Italy |
| 237 | Louis | El khoury | Mayo Clinic | Senior Research Fellow in Epigenomics | USA |
| 238 | Lourdes | Prieto | Comisaría General de Policía Científica (Spanish Forensic Police). DNA Laboratory | DNA expert | Spain |
| 239 | Lu | Dejian | Zhong Medical college of Sun Yat-sen Universitiy | Associate professor | China |
| 240 | Luciano | Garofano | Accademia Italiana di Scienze Forensi | President | Italy |
| 241 | Lucinda | Davenport | King's College London | - | UK |
| 242 | Luis | Medina | UFRGS | - | Brazil |
| 243 | Luis Armando | Zuñiga ccoica | MINISTERIO DE JUSTICIA Y DERECHOS HUMANOS DEL PERÚ | ANALISTA DEL BANCO DE DATOS GENÉTICOS DE LA DIRECCIÓN DE REGISTRO E INVESTIGACIÓN FORENSE | Peru |
| 244 | Luis Eduardo | Vargas | INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE MEDICINA LEGAL Y CIENCIAS FORENSES | PROFESIONAL | COLOMBIA |
| 245 | Lutz | Roewer | Dept. Forensic Genetics, Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences Berlin , Germany | Lab director, Assistant Professor of Forensic Genetics | Germany |
| 246 | Lydie | Samie | Unit of Genetic, University Center of Legal Medicine, Lausanne - Geneva | - | Switzerland |
| 247 | Maarja | Sadam | Estonian Forensic Science Institute | Senior DNA expert | Estonia |
| 248 | Magdalena | Romero | Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team | DNA analist | Argentina |
| 249 | Malte | Bamberg | Institute of Legal Medicine Ulm | - | Germany |
| 250 | Manruí | Li | Sichuan University | graduate student | China |
| 251 | Manuel | Crespillo | Instituto Nacional de Toxicología y Ciency Forenses | Head of Biology Service | Spain |
| 252 | Manuel | Paredes lopez | NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF LEGAL MEDICINE AND FORENSIC SCIENCES OF COLOMBIA | FORENSIC GENETICS ANALYST AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCHER | Colombia |
| 253 | Marcin | Woźniak | Chair of Forensic Medicine, Collegium Medicum of the Nicolaus Copernicus University, Bydgoszcz, Poland | Professor | Poland |
| 254 | Margarita | Vela | Cruz Roja Ecuatoriana | Analista | Ecuador |
| 255 | Maria | Szargut | Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin | Postdoc | Poland |
| 256 | Maria Agustina | Dorigón lezana | Poder Judicial de Santiago del Estero, Argentina | Directora | Argentina |
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| 258 | Maria Antonella | Piga | University of Milan - Via L. Mangiagalli, 37 - 20133 Milan, Italy | adjunct professor of legal medicine | Italy |
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| 260 | Maria Esther | Sosa | Laboratorio Central de Corrientes | - | Argentina |
| 261 | Maria Eugenia | D'amato | University of the Western Cape | Professor | South Africa |
| 262 | Maria Ignacia | Castillo | INDEPENDENT | PROFESSIONAL SPECIALIZED FORENSIC GENETICS | Other |
| 263 | Maria José | Farfán | Instituto Nacional de Toxicología y Ciencias Forenses | Forensic Geneticist | Spain |
| 264 | Maria Laura | Parolin | Instituto de Diversidad y Evolución Austral-CONICET | Investigadora Adjunta -CONICET | Argentina |
| 265 | Maria Laura | Catelli | Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense | Biochemist | Argentina |
| 266 | Maria Luiza | De oliveira | Universidade de São Paulo | Doctorate student | Brazil |
| 267 | Maria Matilde | Filiberti | Poder Judicial Rio Negro-Argentina | Personal del Laboratorio Regional de Genética Forense- Poder Judicial Rio Negro-Argentina | Argentina |
| 268 | Maria Mercedes | Lojo | Banco Provincial de Datos Genéticos- SCJ Buenos Aires | Dirección | Argentina |
| 269 | Maria Rosa | Barilaro | Ministry of the Interior | - | Italy |
| 270 | Maria Teresa | Zarrabeitia | University of Cantabria | Professor | Spain |
| 271 | Maria Veronica | Masciovecchio | IACA LABORATORIOS | Professional | Argentina |
| 272 | Mariana | Herrera piñero | Banco Nacional De Datos Genéticos | Director | Argentina |
| 273 | Marina | Baldi | Eurofins Genoma Group | Technical Director | Italy |
| 274 | Marina | Gosatti | Laboratorio Regional de Genética Forense - Poder Judicial de la provincia de Rio Negro | Bioquímica | Argentina |
| 275 | Mario | Giamperi | libero professionista pensionato | - | Italy |
| 276 | Marta | Montesino | Comisaría General de Policía Científica. DNA Laboratory | Technician | Spain |
| 277 | Martin | Bodner | Medical University of Innsbruck, Legal Medicine | Postdoc Researcher | Austria |
| 278 | Martin | Zieger | University of Bern, Institute of Forensic Medicine | Deputy head of department | Switzerland |
| 279 | Marzio Massimiliano | Capra | University of Milan - Forensic Genetics Laboratory. Via L. Mangiagalli, 37 - 20133 Milan, Italy | Researcher | Italy |
| 280 | Massimo | Lancia | Università di Perugia | Associate Professor | Italy |
| 281 | Matthew | Watters | Eurofins Viracor BioPharma | Laboratory Operations Supervisor and Expert Witness | USA |
| 282 | Maurizio | Marchionni | Free professional | Doctor of medicine | Italy |
| 283 | Mauro | Pesaresi | Università Politecnica delle Marche | Researcher | Italy |
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| 285 | Melanie | Grabmüller | Institute of Legal Medicine Bonn | Head of Laboratory | Germany |
| 286 | Mengge | Wang | Institute of Forensic Medicine, West China School of Basic Science and Forensic Medicine, Sichuan University, China | PhD candidate | China |
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| 289 | Michel | Bottinelli | Laboratorio di Diagnostica Molecolare | Scientific Director | Switzerland |
| 290 | Michele | Di nunzio | Universidad de Barcelona | PhD Researcher | Spain |
| 291 | Miguel | Marino | Registro Provincial de Huellas Genéticas Digitalizadas, Ministerio Público Fiscal de Mendoza | Director | Argentina |
| 292 | Miguel Angel | Rubio mas | Ministerio Público Fiscal de Tucumán | Responsable del Laboratorio de Genética Forense | Argentina |
| 293 | Miguel Angel | García | Guardia Civil (España) - Criminalistic Service | Technical Direction of the Biology Department | Spain |
| 294 | Mike | Liu | SUN YAT-SEN UNIVERSITY | Doctor | China |
| 295 | Min | Li | Shanghai Key Laboratory of Forensic Medicine | - | China |
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| 297 | Mirella | Gherardi | ausl Valle d'Aosta | Dirigente medico | Italy |
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| 299 | Monica | Abreu-głowacka | Poznan University of Medical Sciences, Department of Forensic Medicine | Head of the forensic genetics laboratory | Poland |
| 300 | Monica | Omedei | Centro Regionale Antidoping A. Bertinaria | Forensic biologist | Italy |
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| 310 | Noemi | Procopio | Northumbria University Newcastle | Senior Research Fellow | UK |
| 311 | Nunzia | Cannovo | Av3 | Dirigente medico | Italy |
| 312 | Olivier | Cepil | Biomnis Empreintes Génétiques | - | France |
| 313 | Oltra | Silvestre | Hospital La Fe | PhD | Spain |
| 314 | Óscar | García | Forensic Science Unit, Forensic Genetics Laboratory, Basque Country Police | Analyst and researcher | Spain |
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| # | First Name | Last Name | Institution | Position | Country |
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| 321 | Paolo | Romagnoli | University of Florence, Italy | Full professor of Histology, retired | Italy |
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| 323 | Patricia | Vásquez | Asociación Pro-Búsqueda de El Salvador | - | El Salvador |
| 324 | Patrício | Reyes | Legal Medical Service | Forensic Biochemist | Chile |
| 325 | Paulo | Chaves | Superintendência de Polícia Técnico-Científica de Goiás | Forensic Geneticist | Brazil |
| 326 | Paulo | Dario | Instituto Nacional de Saúde Doutor Ricardo Jorge, Portugal | Scientific Researcher | Portugal |
| 327 | Paulo | Raimann | PUCRS | - | Brazil |
| 328 | Pedro | Barrio | Instituto Nacional de Toxicología y Ciencias Forenses, Departamento de Madrid. | Facultativo | Spain |
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| 331 | Peter | Schneider | Institute of Legal Medicine, University of Cologne, Germany | Professor, Head of Div. of Forensic Genetics | Germany |
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| 335 | Preeti | Singh | Wildlife Institute of India | Forensic Researcher | India |
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| 338 | Qian | Wang | College of Forensic Medicine, Hebei Medical University | - | China |
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| 340 | Qiannan | Xu | Sichuan University | - | China |
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| 342 | Raffaele | Giorgetti | Università Politecnica delle Marche, Forensic Toxicology | Full Professor | Italy |
| 343 | Rashid | Alghafri | Dubai Police | Director of Research and Development | Italy |
| 344 | Raymond | Gromsbo phd, f-aafs (ret) | Semi-retired private practice | Forensic Scientist/Criminalist | USA |
| 345 | Rebecca | Just | NBACC | Associate Principal Investigator, Genomics | USA |
| 346 | Regina Maria | Barreto cicarelli | UNESP - São Paulo - Brasil | Full Professor | Brazil |
| 347 | Renato | Fucili | None | None | Italy |
| 348 | Riccardo | Zoja | University of Milan | Full professor | Italy |
| 349 | Richard | Zehner | Institute for Legal Medicine, University of Frankfurt, Germany | - | Germany |
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| 351 | Robert | Allen | School of Forensic Sciences, Oklahoma State University | Professor | USA |
| 352 | Roberto | Celis | Servicio médico legal Chile | Biochemist forensic | Chile |
| 353 | Rocío | Gastambide | Laboratorio Regional de Genética Forense- Poder Judicial de Río Negro | Perito | Argentina |
| 354 | Rocio del pilar | Lizarazo quintero | INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE MEDICINA LEGAL Y CIENCIAS FORENSES - BOGOTÁ - COLOMBIA | Coordinadora Grupo Genética Forense - Dirección Regional Bogotá | Colombia |
| 355 | Rodrigo | Flores | Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro | Estudiante | Brasil |
| 356 | Rodrigo | Moura-neto | Federal University of Rio de Janeiro | Professor | Brazil |
| 357 | Romanini | Carola | Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense (EAAF) | Responsable de Calidad y Responsable de Post-PCR | Argentina |
| 358 | Romina | Coloccini | Police of the City | - | Argentina |
| 359 | Ronaldo | Cameiro da silva junior | Brazilian Federal Police | Custodian of the National DNA Database | Brazil |
| 360 | Ronny | Decorte | University of Leuven | Associate professor | Belgium |
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| 365 | Ruben | Sevillano | Basque Institute of Legal Medicine | Forensic Pathologist | Spain |
| 366 | Ruiyang | Tao | Academy of Forensic Science, Ministry of Justice, China | PhD student | China |
| 367 | Ruocheng | Xia | Shanghai Key Laboratory of Forensic Medicine | - | China |
| 368 | Ruth | Montgomery | Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Laboratory | DNA Technical Leader | USA |
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| 370 | Sabina | Canestrari | Medicina Legale AV5 ASUR Marche | - | Italia |
| 371 | Sabrina | Ingold | University of Bern | Scientific Associate | Switzerland |
| 372 | Sanchez | Lorena | Cruz Roja | - | Spain |
| 373 | Sandeep | Gupta | Wildlife Institute of India | Principal Scientist | India |
| 374 | Sandra | Avila | Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses- Colombia | Profesional Especializado Forense | Colombia |
| 375 | Sandra | Filippini | Hospital Durand | PhD Biochemist | Argentina |
| 376 | Sandra Beatriz | Furfuro | Laboratorio de Análisis de ADN FCM Uncuyo | Laboratory Director | Argentina |

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| 379 | Sarah | Noel | LSJML | DNA analyst | Canada |
| 380 | Sarah Aurora | Heß | University of Cologne | PhD student | Germany |
| 381 | Selena | Cisana | Centro Regionale Antidoping | Forensic DNA specialist and researcher | Italy |
| 382 | Selma | Sales | INSTITUTO DE PESQUISA E PERICIA EM GENETICA FORENSE | Perito Criminal | Brazil |
| 383 | Sheng | Xiang | Institute of Forensic Science | Shanghai | China |
| 384 | Shengjie | Nie | School of Forensic Medicine, Kunming Medical University | Deputy dean | China |
| 385 | Shengqiu | Qu | Sichuan University | Ph. D. Candidate | China |
| 386 | Shihan | Xi | Shanghai Key Laboratory of Forensic Medicine | - | China |
| 387 | Shouyu | Wang | Institute of forensic medicine, Sichuan university | Ph.D student | China |
| 388 | Shuqiang | Cao | sichuan university | PhD student | china |
| 389 | Sikorsky | Julie | Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office | Forensic Biology Unit - Forensic Scientist Supervisor | USA |
| 390 | Silvia | Utz | University of Bern | Head of department | Switzerland |
| 391 | Silvia | Vannelli rey | LABORATORIO REGIONAL DE GENETICA FORENSE- PODER JUDICIAL DE RIO NEGRO-ARGENTINA | DIRECTORA | Argentina |
| 392 | Silviene | De oliveira | Universidade De Brasilia | Asaociate Professor | Brazil |
| 393 | Simon | Egger | Institut für Rechtsmedizin Basel | Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter | Switzerland |
| 394 | Simona | Severini | Laboratory of Forensic Science – Azienda Ospedaliera "S. Maria", Terni-Italy | Biologist | Italy |
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| 429 | Vincenzo Lorenzo | Pascali | medicina legale università cattolica | Full professor | Italy |
| 430 | Vittorio | Marchesotti | Medico Legale SC ASL AI | Dirigente medico | Italy |
| 431 | Viviana | Ojeda | Servicio Medico Legal | Perito en genética forense | Chile |
| 432 | Volker | Weirich | State Office of Criminal Investigation Mecklenburg-Vorpommern | DNA expert | Germany |
| 433 | Walter | Bär | University of Zurich | Prof.emert./Director | Switzerland |
| 434 | Walter Rubén | Bozzo | Banco Nacional de Datos Genéticos | Subdirector Técnico | Argentina |
| 435 | Walther | Parson | Medical University of Innsbruck | Head of Forensic Gnomics | Austria |
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