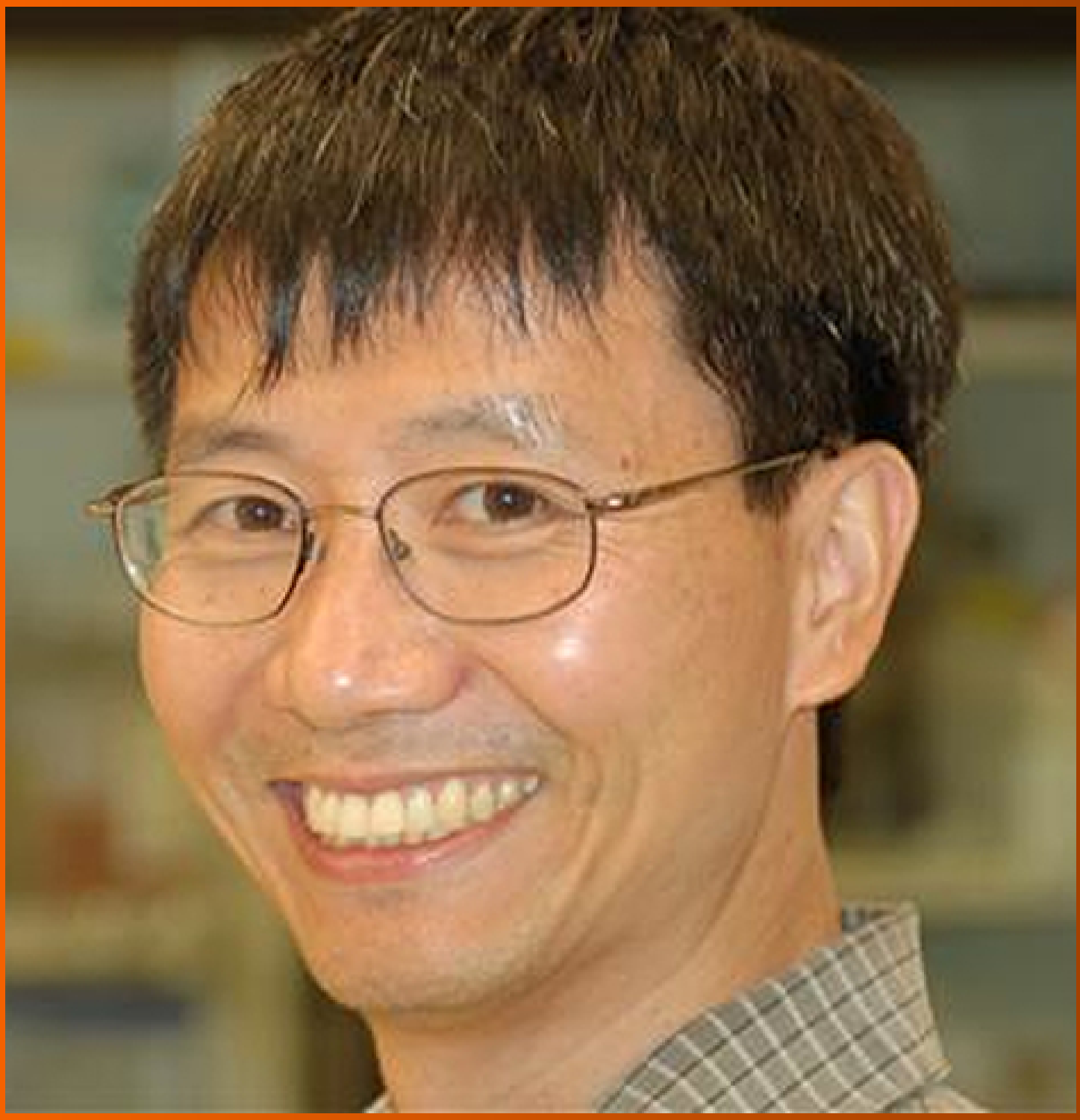
ISSN 1948-0210 (online)

World Journal of *Stem Cells*

World J Stem Cells 2023 August 26; 15(8): 781-875



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AIMS AND SCOPE

The primary aim of *World Journal of Stem Cells* (*WJSC*, *World J Stem Cells*) is to provide scholars and readers from various fields of stem cells with a platform to publish high-quality basic and clinical research articles and communicate their research findings online. *WJSC* publishes articles reporting research results obtained in the field of stem cell biology and regenerative medicine, related to the wide range of stem cells including embryonic stem cells, germline stem cells, tissue-specific stem cells, adult stem cells, mesenchymal stromal cells, induced pluripotent stem cells, embryonal carcinoma stem cells, hemangioblasts, lymphoid progenitor cells, *etc*.

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The *WJSC* is now abstracted and indexed in Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE, also known as SciSearch®), Journal Citation Reports/Science Edition, PubMed, PubMed Central, Scopus, Biological Abstracts, BIOSIS Previews, Reference Citation Analysis, China National Knowledge Infrastructure, China Science and Technology Journal Database, and Superstar Journals Database. The 2023 Edition of Journal Citation Reports® cites the 2022 impact factor (IF) for *WJSC* as 4.1; IF without journal self cites: 3.9; 5-year IF: 4.5; Journal Citation Indicator: 0.53; Ranking: 15 among 29 journals in cell and tissue engineering; Quartile category: Q3; Ranking: 99 among 191 journals in cell biology; and Quartile category: Q3. The *WJSC*'s CiteScore for 2022 is 8.0 and Scopus CiteScore rank 2022: Histology is 9/57; Genetics is 68/325; Genetics (clinical) is 19/90; Molecular Biology is 119/380; Cell Biology is 95/274.

RESPONSIBLE EDITORS FOR THIS ISSUE

Production Editor: *Xiang-Di Zhang*; **Production Department Director:** *Xu Guo*; **Editorial Office Director:** *Jia-Ru Fan*.

NAME OF JOURNAL
World Journal of Stem Cells

ISSN
ISSN 1948-0210 (online)

LAUNCH DATE
December 31, 2009

FREQUENCY
Monthly

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF
Shengwen Calvin Li, Carlo Ventura

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS
https://www.wjgnet.com/1948-0210/editorialboard.htm

PUBLICATION DATE
August 26, 2023

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World Journal of Stem Cells

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World J Stem Cells 2023 August 26; 15(8): 781-786

DOI: 10.4252/wjsc.v15.i8.781

ISSN 1948-0210 (online)

EDITORIAL

Mastering the craft: Creating an insightful and widely-cited literature review

Shengwen Calvin Li

Specialty type: Medicine, general and internal

Provenance and peer review: Invited article; Externally peer reviewed.

Peer-review model: Single blind

Peer-review report's scientific quality classification

Grade A (Excellent): 0
Grade B (Very good): B, B
Grade C (Good): 0
Grade D (Fair): 0
Grade E (Poor): 0

P-Reviewer: Gica N, Romania; Kode JA, India

Received: August 8, 2023
Peer-review started: August 9, 2023
First decision: August 14, 2023
Revised: August 22, 2023
Accepted: August 23, 2023
Article in press: August 23, 2023
Published online: August 26, 2023

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Abstract

The art of constructing an insightful literature review manuscript has witnessed an exemplar in the work of Oz *et al* (2023), wherein concept progression harmoniously merges with figures and tables. Reflecting on retrospective data science, it is evident that well-cited articles can wield a transformative influence on the Journal Citation Reports Impact Factor score, as exemplified by Robert Weinberg's landmark on cancer (Hanahan and Weinberg, 2011). Here, we aim to spotlight a commendable contribution by Tuba Oz, Ajeet Kaushik, and Małgorzata Kujawska in this issue while pivoting towards identifying the hallmarks of a subpar literature review-elements that hinder rather than promote advancement. The hurdles and roadblocks encountered within subpar literature reviews are multifold. Anticipation of emerging trends, identification of challenges, and exploration of solutions remain conspicuously absent. Original Contributions fail to surface amidst the vast sea of pre-existing literature, with noticeable gaps amplified by the lack of illustrative figures and tables. The manuscript, at times, assumes a skeletal form, reflecting an attempt to accommodate an excess of references, leading to convoluted sentences laden with citations. In contrast, a potent solution lies in adopting a comprehensive approach. A nuanced and critical evaluation of sources can culminate in a robust discussion, surpassing the mere summarization of conclusions drawn by others. This approach, often dismissed, holds the potential to elevate clarity, coherence, and logical flow, ultimately inviting engaged readership and coveted citations. The critical necessity of integrating visionary insights is underscored and achieved through a rigorous analysis of pivotal concepts and innovative ideas. Examples can be harnessed to elucidate the application of these solutions. We advocate a paradigm shift, urging literature review writers to embrace the readers' perspective. A literature review's purpose extends beyond providing a comprehensive panorama; it should illuminate avenues for concept development

within a specific field of interest. By achieving this balance, literature reviews stand to captivate a devoted readership, paving the way for manuscripts that are both widely read and frequently cited. The pathway forward requires a fusion of astute analysis and visionary insights, shaping the future of literature review composition.

Key Words: Literature review; Concept progression; Data science; Journal Citation Reports Impact Factor; Original contributions; Comprehensive approach; Clarity and coherence; Visionary insights; Reader engagement; Concept development

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Core Tip: This manuscript highlights a remarkable literature review, demonstrating a seamless fusion of concept progression with figures and tables. Reflecting on data science, it reveals how influential articles can impact the Journal Citation Report Impact Factor. We focus on identifying elements hindering effective literature reviews. Key challenges include absent trend anticipation, gaps in original contributions, and skeletal content. To address this, we propose a comprehensive approach involving critical evaluation, fostering clarity, coherence, and reader engagement. Integration of visionary insights and examples further enhances the impact, emphasizing the importance of concept development and paving the way for influential literature reviews.

Citation: Li SC. Mastering the craft: Creating an insightful and widely-cited literature review. *World J Stem Cells* 2023; 15(8): 781-786
URL: https://www.wjgnet.com/1948-0210/full/v15/i8/781.htm
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4252/wjsc.v15.i8.781

INTRODUCTION

As an editor-in-chief and academic editor, I have not read an insightful literature review until now[1], which came with concept progression well illustrated in figures and tables. Second, retrospective data science revealed a few well-cited articles elevated a Journal Citation Reports Impact Factor score tremendously, *e.g.*, the hallmarks of Cancer by Robert Weinberg, accumulating 69346 citations[2]. Thus, I would like to point out a good one in this issue by Tuba Oz, Ajeet Kaushik, and Małgorzata Kujawska, which might help extrapolate some elements from their writing. However, rather than talk about good elements, I wanted to illustrate the list of inferior elements: The elements that construct a sub-standard literature review, as my conviction was that spotting roadblocks and putting forth measures to tackle those help take success to a higher level.

HURDLES AND ROADBLOCKS

The manuscript text lacked anticipation of any trends, failed to identify or provide answers to particular challenges or problems, and did not identify any leading problems or exceptional opportunities in the sub-field. Given the abundance of existing literature in the field, no original contributions were apparent in the content. Additionally, there seemed to be general gaps in the material, particularly evident in the absence of figures and tables.

Certain sections of the text appeared to be very sketchy, giving the impression that the manuscript was significantly cut down to include over 100 references, and specific sentences crowded cited up to 10 references in one phrase without details on what was about each reference. Instead of merely describing conclusions drawn by other authors, *i.e.*, regurgitating the known facts and data, the authors did not propose their insightful themes based on updating the article by engaging in a more thorough analysis of key concepts and ideas to explore uncharted water, by asking new questions and offering innovative speculations.

The final obstacle in our pursuit was intricately related to the meticulous referencing of the primary data articles. It went beyond the straightforward act of merely acknowledging the sources; it encompassed the intricate task of accurately framing distinct data sets and explicitly attributing terminologies to their original sources. This presented a distinct challenge: The emergence of crowd-group-article citing, where up to seven citations were amalgamated within a single sentence or even a solitary phrase.

CIRCUMVENTING HURDLES IN THE ROAD LEADS TO WELL-READ AND FREQUENTLY-CITED MANUSCRIPTS IN A LITERATURE REVIEW

This flush-out thinking would involve drawing on a range of relevant sources to produce a detailed and insightful discussion. Such critical analysis would be preferable to the alternative of simply summarizing the conclusions drawn by

others. If addressed, all the above elements, particularly the visionary element, might lead to better clarity, coherence, and logical flow, which earns readership and citations. I could illustrate how to overcome these hurdles with examples. My conviction: Advancements in literature review manuscripts require vision, foresight, assiduity, tenacity, determination, and the unwavering courage to go where others fear and hesitate. Why not? Why not consider the unimaginable? It is often claimed that success comprises 99% hard work and 1% inspiration: Both are essential, and neither is a minus.

"Imagination is far more important than knowledge". These profound words, which sprang from the mind of a genius named Albert Einstein, reverberate through the halls of time, lighting a flame of inspiration that guides us beyond the limitations of what we know. Einstein tells us that the power of imagination is the lighthouse that lights up new horizons, which is a crucial point to remember in a society where facts and data often take center stage.

Consider the following: Every spectacular discovery, every extraordinary creation, and every creative leap began in the limitless world of the human imagination. Knowledge provides us with the instruments to comprehend, but imagination gives us the wings to transcend. Such a wing's power propels us sky-high to bird-view unexplored territory and invites us to dance on the edge of the known while welcoming us to embrace the mysteries that lie beyond.

Then there are inquiries, which are unassuming yet powerful forces that propel forward-growth. "Asking questions is more important than knowledge", remarked Albert Einstein. How accurately this is said! The very act of questioning, of attempting to understand the complexities of the cosmos, is a declaration of both our intrinsic curiosity and our unyielding willpower to learn more. Questions kindle the flame of discovery, taking us down roads we've never traveled before and opening the door to worlds we would never have imagined were possible.

Imagine a world in which people simply accepted what they already knew without any attempt to learn more or to satisfy their natural curiosity. In such a world, there would be no development or invention, and people would just sit about doing nothing productive. But we are not content to live in that reality because we are driven by an insatiable appetite to learn more, to understand better, and to elevate ourselves beyond the confines of the present. This hunger compels us to seek out new information and new perspectives.

The words of Albert Einstein are a tribute to the reality that knowledge is a basis but that imagination and inquiry are the wings that propel us to new heights. Knowledge is a foundation. Therefore, let us not be afraid to fantasize beyond the bounds of what is already known. Let us use the power of imagination to conceive of worlds that have not yet been seen and possibilities that have not yet been investigated. And let us never stop asking questions; for by doing so, we create the path for a future that is brighter, bolder, and bursting with the grandeur of human potential. Let us never stop asking questions.

Along the line of referencing, the challenge was not only ensuring accurate citations but also preserving the content's clarity and flow. The risk of overwhelming the reader with an excess of citations was ever-present, demanding a judicious selection process. Each citation had to be carefully evaluated for its relevance and its ability to enhance the understanding of the topic under discussion. Navigating this obstacle required a delicate balance between comprehensive acknowledgment and maintaining the coherence of the narrative. It necessitated the establishment of a coherent thread that seamlessly interwove the multitude of sources while upholding the integrity of the information presented. The complexity lay in recognizing that each citation represented a distinct facet of the overarching concept, contributing a unique perspective to the discourse. It necessitated precision in language, strategic distribution of citations, and a steadfast commitment to maintaining clarity. This intricate dance between referencing and readability was a testament to our dedication to scholarly rigor while delivering information in a manner that was accessible and engaging to our audience. Through this process, we not only conquered the hurdle of crowd-group citing but also upheld the standards of meticulous scholarship in our work.

THE EXAMPLES

The first classical example is the literature review "the hallmarks of Cancer" by Robert Weinberg and his collaborator Douglas Hanahan. They proposed six elements, including maintaining proliferative signaling, evading growth inhibitory signals, resisting programmed cell death, facilitating perpetual replication potential, inducing the formation of new blood vessels (angiogenesis), and triggering processes of cellular invasion and metastasis as the hallmarks of cancer in 2010[3], earning 41039 citations. Two underlying causes are fundamental to acquiring these hallmark traits: Genomic instability, which drives the rapid accumulation of genetic variants, and inflammation, which supports several hallmark activities. Beyond the boundaries of the cancer cells themselves, tumors add another level of complexity due to the presence of a group of cells that, on the surface, appear normal but are actually recruited to help the tumor develop its distinctive traits. This environment is known as the "tumor microenvironment". It is hoped that acknowledging these concepts' broad applicability would substantially impact the development of cutting-edge methods for battling human cancer.

Over the past ten years, there has been a remarkable surge of innovation in our understanding of fundamental concepts beyond the original six-element hallmarks. This period of intellectual evolution has unveiled a pair of promising new frontiers that hold the key to widespread applicability. These cutting-edge developments, akin to beacons illuminating uncharted territory, encompass the manipulation of energy metabolism and the art of outwitting the immune system's defenses, resulting in eight hallmarks of Cancer by Robert Weinberg, accumulating 69346 citations[2].

The canvas of knowledge has been enriched by an exciting brushstroke, as reprogramming the intricate dance of energy within cells emerges as a captivating endeavor. Imagine orchestrating a symphony within the microscopic realm, fine-tuning the metabolic pathways that govern life's essence as spatiotemporal regulation[4]. This spatial omics biology endeavor promises not only to enhance our ability to engineer solutions to a spectrum of challenges but also to unlock the potential for revitalizing weary cells, paving the way for novel therapies and rejuvenation.

In parallel, we witness a daring expedition into the realm of immune evasion-a pursuit that mirrors the cunning strategies of spies and adventurers. Just as an artful rogue slips through the clutches of pursuers, scientists are unraveling the enigmatic mechanisms that allow specific cells to evade the immune system's watchful eye, in particular, Carl June's invention of chimeric antigen receptor T cells immunotherapy (5702 citations)[5] in a designer fashion[6]. This tantalizing avenue opens avenues to fortifying our defenses against diseases, enabling medical interventions to bypass the barricades that often hinder treatment progress.

Together, these eight emergent pillars of insight symbolize a profound transformation in our comprehension of cancer's intricate dance. They beckon us to a landscape where creativity interlaces with knowledge, inviting us to craft innovative solutions, reinvigorate cellular vitality, and conquer challenges once deemed insurmountable. As we embark on this exhilarating voyage of discovery, the horizons of possibility stretch ever wider, promising a future enriched by the fusion of imagination and scientific achievement. All of the above visional elements earned 69346 citations, much higher than their previous 2000's article, which had 41039 citations on August 7, 2023, reflecting the conceptual development that attracts the increased readership.

The second example of a highly specialized and small domain is my own research to illustrate some visional elements by proposing new terminologies. We applied a new method that has been well used (1207 citations)[7]. We presented two new terminologies, the caveolin scaffolding domain (CSD) (969 citations)[8] and the CSD binding motif (CBM) (1129 citations)[9]. Both CSD and CBM have been well studied, which led to assistance to therapeutic development like albumin-bound (nab) paclitaxel (nab-paclitaxel; Abraxane), a $2.9 billion platform of cancer drug delivery by Patrick Soon-Shiong[10]. They further found that elevated levels of CAV1/2 expression are linked to poorer disease-free survival (DFS) and overall survival (OS) outcomes among individuals treated with paclitaxel. In contrast, among patients treated with nab-paclitaxel, heightened CAV1/2 expression appears to correlate with improved pathologic complete response rates while not imposing a significant negative impact on DFS or OS when compared to individuals with lower CAV1/2 expression levels[11]. This example manifested the conceptual development that prompted therapeutic development, followed by clinical validations.

The third approach is to propose a broad application of an envisioned technology. We hypothesized that "Hunting down the dominating subclone of cancer stem cells as a potential new therapeutic target in multiple myeloma: An artificial intelligence perspective" (16 citations)[12]. We also postulated "A biological global positioning system (bGPS): Considerations for tracking stem cell behaviors in the whole body", with eight elements to fulfill stem cell therapies (74 citations)[13]. Specifically, in response to monitoring the detrimental effects of stem cell therapies, we have outlined an all-encompassing bGPS designed to monitor the trajectory of transplanted stem cells. This system incorporates eight essential components, each meticulously tailored to ensure the efficacy of stem cell transplantation (SCT). These components encompass the following: (1) Sensitivity for single cell detection; (2) real-time positioning; (3) an inducible system; (4) retractable; (5) targeted and durable; (6) monitoring cell fate; (7) compliant with the FDA GMP guidelines for clinical applications; and (8) quantification capacity. By integrating these eight critical attributes, our proposed biological GPS not only addresses the aforementioned challenges but also provides a comprehensive framework for effectively tracking and assessing the transplanted stem cells during SCT. This holistic approach underscores our commitment to establishing a robust and clinically compliant solution that ensures the success of stem cell transplantation and holds the potential to enhance the field of regenerative medicine significantly. Future experimentation is needed to achieve the predictions.

The final approach could be to point out that some limitations exist in the current trend of studies. We pointed out that "Cancer genomic research at the crossroads: Realizing the changing genetic landscape as intratumoral spatial and temporal heterogeneity becomes a confounding factor" (44 citations)[14], thereby conjuring up hope for improvements through identifying potentials and challenges (76 citations)[15]. The manuscript led to sum up with specific solutions, such as "Control dominating subclones for managing cancer progression and posttreatment recurrence by subclonal switchboard signal: Implication for new therapies"-a key to two Nature articles and related column of "News & View" on the issue (28 citations)[16]. All of these thoughtful articles prompted the spatial and temporal intervention strategies of various diseases with the integration of machine learning models[17].

THE METRICS

We want to emphasize that while journal impact factors matter less, the impact of being cited does. An insightful remark during a prestigious award presentation caught attention: Physicists with 2000 citations or more fall within the top 1% globally. This figure corresponds to around 210 citations annually over a decade. Interestingly, citation thresholds vary by field, and approximately 44% of published manuscripts remain uncited. Strikingly, almost half of published manuscripts go uncited, and just a single citation places a manuscript near the upper half. Accumulating 10 citations elevates an article into the top quartile while surpassing 100 citations propels a paper to the top 1.8%. The crucial takeaway is that the average number of citations per manuscript tends to remain below 10 (Refer the details to Scott D. Weingart, MD: https://Lucbeaulieu.com/2015/11/19/how-many-citations-are-actually-a-lot-of-citations/) and (https://renaissance.stonybrookmedicine.edu/emergencymedicine/faculty/Weingart).

The database Thomson Reuters Web of Science's average number of citations per article published in scientific journals is as follows (URL: Web of Science Core Collection-Clarivate) using algorithms[18] and based on 4 million authors and 26 million scientific papers that span 15 years and 118 scientific disciplines[19] (Table 1).

Table 1 Average number of citations per article

Disciplines	Citations
Life sciences and medicine	6 to 30 citations
Physical sciences and engineering	5 to 20 citations
Social sciences	5 to 15 citations
Humanities, including literature, history, and philosophy	1 to 5 citations

CONCLUSION

In summary, authors should keep the readers' perspective in mind: Why did they come to read a literature review? A literature review should shed new light on concept development in a particular field. Not only does it offer a comprehensive snapshot of an area of interest, but it also provides promising directions for exploring questions. Both are essential; neither is minor to drum up an enthusiastic readership, leading to well-read and frequently-cited manuscripts in a literature review.

FOOTNOTES

Author contributions: Li SC analyzed the data, wrote the manuscript, and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict-of-interest statement: Li SC declared no conflict-of-interest.

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Country/Territory of origin: United States

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S-Editor: Chen YL
L-Editor: A
P-Editor: Chen YL

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