

REFEREES, THE HIDDEN HEROES OF INTERCIENCIA*

The successful continuity of any scientific journal is dependent upon a number of factors, many of which are not visible to the reading public. Such assertion becomes extensive to numerous people who work at several entities (editorial office, production and distribution houses, financing bodies, etc.) that, generally, are mentioned in some hidden place in the journal. Nowhere are to be found the referees, who are so embedded in the publication process and contribute in such a high degree to the final product.

The work of those who perform the “peer review” carries the responsibility, shared with the editors, of the most important achievement, often difficult to visualize, as is the quality of the published material. Their wisdom, rigor and objectivity are determinant factors in the level achieved by the publication, weighing as much or more than other journal assessment factors such as publication speed, timing and printing quality.

The quality and prestige of a scientific publication relies to a great extent on those who evaluate the manuscripts received, on their capacity to judge about their quality and pertinence, and to give a prompt answer to authors. The good referee fully assumes the responsibility of evaluating objectively the received manuscripts and delivers swiftly his observations and commentaries, providing the editors with the needed means to proceed.

A very large percentage of the papers accepted for publication in *Interciencia* are returned to authors for revision

in larger or lesser degree, after suggestions and recommendations of anonymous referees, who examine all of the received manuscripts.

The didactic role of those hidden heroes is not fully appreciated. Through serious and careful refereeing, young -and sometimes not so young- scientists are subjected to an important exercise that allows them to clarify concepts and improve writing and presentation, providing a higher value to their research. The latter not only has to be well done. It has to be well presented so that the reading community captures easily and profits from the new concepts and the results obtained through a work that is the main reason of being for science professionals as well as for many members of institutions of higher education. Many scientific publications, as well as those institutions that sponsor them, have a policy of payment for refereeing. There is no doubt that it is well deserved but some journals, *Interciencia* among them, have chosen not to do so. The collaboration so given, not only to the journal but to the scientific community at large, is invaluable and deserves the most genuine recognition.

MIGUEL LAUFER
Editor

* Copy of the editorial published in *Interciencia* (2004) 29: 233-234.