



## OPEN ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE: A NEW RIGHT CREATED BY GLOBALIZATION

The concept of globalization has certainly had an impact on how we see the world. It emerges from the blurring of borders between countries, less independent control of the State over its citizens (1), and shorter effective time between an event occurring and news of it traveling around the world people (2). There are several reasons that explain the emergence of this paradigm: technological developments like the World Wide Web that has given rise to social media such as Facebook, by no means subject to physical borders; immediate access to information either through traditional media like television or press, or through new media like Twitter or YouTube (we all have a clear recall of the live broadcast on television of the attack against the Twin Towers); and, finally, the creation of supranational agencies charged with the role of ensuring respect for human rights, as is the case of the International Criminal Court (ICC) (3).

Some authors explain that globalization originates in the prevalent economic tenets of the day: capitalism and the market economy. The idea is to have increasingly larger markets for the consumption of goods and services and to diminish control over international money transactions and investments (4). Hence the talk about global companies like The Coca-cola Company, free trade agreements, and capital flows between countries (1).

In this new scenario, weak economies are subjected to pressures imposed by transnational companies or their representatives (5). Added to economic consequences, there are social effects like impacts on workers and population migrations unseen

in the recent past, as is the case of crowds fleeing to Europe from places like Syria and North Africa.

The phenomenon of globalization has been characterized by a growing influence of the high-income countries over middle and low-income countries, and outflow of capital from developing countries towards the rich economies. However, true globalization requires a balance in the sale of goods and services, capital flows, as well as in other fundamental aspects of human wellbeing such access to work, health and education and, in particular, access to knowledge and information. Without these, our countries will have a difficult time coming out from underdevelopment and technological dependence. This subordination to knowledge is a barrier to achieving sustainable, environmentally friendly development instead of development based on the extraction of non-renewable, often highly contaminating, resources (6).

The Open Access Initiative has been the result of this vision of knowledge globalization. This movement seeks to provide unrestricted free public access to academic research, and it is worth remembering that much of this research is financed with public resources in order to accelerate the dissemination of new knowledge and allow authors to reach the largest number of readers (7). To achieve this goal, recommendations are made in the sense of developing open access policies in academic institutions and research funding agencies –Colciencias in the case of Colombia – advocating open licensing of academic work, creating infrastructure for the development of repositories, and creating professional performance

standards for open access publications. On the other hand, the initiative discourages the use of the impact factor as a quality indicator of scientific journals and proposes replacing it with more reliable, less simplistic impact and quality indicators, fully open for use. It is expected that by 2021, open access will be the way to disseminate peer-reviewed research in all fields of health, medicine and other sciences (7).

However, there are many who oppose the open access initiative, some with the argument that only commercial publishers attribute any value to academic publications, that only they know how to index titles appropriately and contribute to the right dissemination among libraries and users of journals at a graduate level, and that it is only through them that the scientific community can be informed about relevant research (8). Their point of departure is the biased vision of the private publishers and, to a certain degree, we are used to the attempts by the transnational companies of high-income countries at disqualifying our competitive products (9). This is a peculiar, lopsided way, to see globalization. However, we are more concerned about other opponents in our own region coming from the standpoint of those that fund research and which purport to use parameters such as the above cited impact index to rate the quality of our journals. This goes against the rightful interest of our researchers and healthcare workers, and also against something that is the rightful property of society, namely public-funded research. Hence the need for Colciencias to reconsider the policy for rating national and regional journals on the basis of the impact factor as advocated by the publishers.

The Colombian Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (*Revista Colombiana de Obstetricia y Ginecología* - RCOG) emphasizes its endorsement to the free access movement and agreement with its goals for the future. For this reason, we will continue to strive to bring editorial management to a new level and provide greater support to our authors so that they can achieve international performance standards. Moreover, we will work to support SciELO,

Redalyc, Lilacs and all other regional databases to help disseminate research conducted in this country and in the region.

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Editor

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