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Abstract

The range and types of performance metrics has recently proliferated in academic settings, with bibliometric indicators being particularly visible examples. One field that has traditionally been hospitable towards such indicators is biomedicine. Here the relative merits of bibliometrics are widely discussed, with debates often portraying them as heroes or villains. Despite a plethora of controversies, one of the most widely used indicators in this field is said to be the Journal Impact Factor (JIF). In this article we argue that much of the current debates around researchers' uses of the JIF in biomedicine can be classed as 'folk theories': explanatory accounts told among a community that seldom (if ever) get systematically checked. Such accounts rarely disclose how knowledge production itself becomes more-or-less consolidated around the JIF. Using ethnographic materials from different research sites in Dutch University Medical Centers, this article sheds new empirical and theoretical light on how performance metrics variously shape biomedical research on the 'shop

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floor.? Our detailed analysis underscores a need for further research into the constitutive effects of evaluative metrics. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)