

Warm up

Who says you cannot get published?

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One cannot go past the achievements of the winners of the Ig Nobel awards when it comes to service to medicine and science.

The Igs are intended to celebrate unusual and imaginative research and are awarded annually by the science humour magazine *Annals of Improbable Research*. The aim is to make people think and laugh, and along the way it may spur people's interest in science, medicine, and technology. The prizes are presented at a gala ceremony held at Harvard University and the awards are given to the winners by genuine Nobel Laureates.

Although sports medicine is not yet a category in these awards one can take inspiration from past winners who are relentlessly pushing the envelope in our field. For example, Americans Edward Cussler and Brian Gettelfinger won for conducting a careful experiment to settle the longstanding scientific question: can people swim faster in syrup or in water?¹ Or what about Ramesh Balasubramaniam and Michael Turvey for explaining the biomechanics of hula-hooping.² We also need to acknowledge Peter Barss of McGill University, for his seminal report in an often neglected area "Injuries Due to Falling Coconuts."³

A winning paper with more of an orthopaedic flavour was by David Dunning of Cornell University and Justin Kreuger of the University of Illinois for their report, "Unskilled and unaware of it: how difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments."⁴

Cognitive science is well represented with recent winners who have studied "The effects of unilateral forced nostril breathing on cognition"⁵ and "How chewing gum flavor affects measures of global complexity of multi-channel EEG"⁶ but one of the real highlights was the paper by Claire Rind and Peter Simmons of Newcastle University in the UK for electrically monitoring the activity of a brain cell in a locust while that locust was watching selected highlights from the movie "Star Wars."⁷ Why? You may well ask.

Some winning studies, however, are far more subtle in their meaning. Take for example, the statistical report "Estimation of the total surface area in Indian elephants"⁸ or perhaps the work using basic principles of physics to calculate the pressure that builds up inside a defecating penguin⁹, or even the discovery that herrings apparently communicate by farting.¹⁰ Myself, I prefer the more practical Australian study by a

colleague of mine "An analysis of the forces required to drag sheep over various surfaces."¹¹ Tricky creatures, sheep. Clearly a low friction surface is required when dragging your sheep around the house.

For those who feel that the rejection letters from editors mean their manuscript may never see the light of day, hope springs eternal.

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