

Mandatory publication for academic promotions- an issue to ponder



Srinivasan BR

Correspondence to:

resure2@yahoo.com

Dr. Bharatwaj Resiure Srinivasan MD, Community Medicine, Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, DM Wayanad Institute Of Medical Sciences, Kerala, India.

Editors for this Article:

Dr. A.K. Pradhan, MBBS, MD. Professor, KIMS, Amalapuram, Editor-In-Chief, Medical Science.

Cite this article:

Srinivasan BR. Mandatory publication for academic promotions- an issue to ponder. Medical Science.2014; 2(2):101-102.

Information about the article

Received: March. 10, 2014

Revised: April 30, 2014

Accepted: June 1, 2014

Published online: June 30, 2014

Dear Sir,

In the pursuit of academic progress, the initiative instituted towards promoting research in all fields including health is most welcome. The compulsoriness of publications for academic promotions which has most likely been an extension of this initiative is now leading to more efforts by academicians in this direction. This could prove to be counterproductive in some ways. There are various aspects to this issue. The fundamentals of any useful research are a valid research question and the appropriate scientific methodology to decipher the answer. Now there are clear cut scientific norms to do the same. All that is fine, but what about an even more important aspect, the aptitude and mind set for doing research. An argument that could be raised is that it can be inculcated by the educational system. In my experience I find that the mind set to question and explore is far less common than the tendency to learn what is already established and follow it with care. Each mind is unique in its organization and finds comfort in a certain way of operation. The effort required to change this established structure is quite a lot and is likely to be successful in only a few cases. Even justification for this effort to change, what someone is comfortable with, is open to query. We have to bear in mind that none is superior or inferior as it is often made out to be and each kind of operation is valid in its own way.

It is quite obvious that when out of compulsion a thing has to be done, it is very likely to breed all kinds of corruption in the process. Further the guidelines are not fool proof and reliable, for example the aspect related to indexing of the journals. There are many indexing services available as on date and there is very little in the way of guidelines for the author to choose the appropriate indexation service. Next comes a very debatable issue related to IF.

IF has been criticized for manipulation and incorrect application [1]. There are multiple factors that could bias the calculation of the IF [2]. A few of these could be related to publication aspects like online availability, publication lag, article preference of journal publishers, subject variability based citation behavior and bias due to influence of journal editors. Also the data base coverage and language preference, procedure used to collect citations and the specific sequential process of IF determination can have a sizeable impact on the credibility of IF [3].



Taking into account the above issues how sensible is it to enforce publication as compulsory criteria for academic progress. Is it all-right to have non-genuine publications on topics that are of practically no relevance in indexed journals of debatable quality? This will only serve to obfuscate the true values that research is meant to engender. Having a bulk load of properly formulated information which is of no application except as a means for promotion is a thing that can be avoided. This is something that has to be in the purview of policy makers when they institute guidelines such that it does not compromise genuineness in the interest of true research.

Key words

Publications, academic promotions

Competing interests

None

Authors' information

Dr. Bharatwaj Resiure Srinivasan MD, Community Medicine, Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, DM Wayanad Institute Of Medical Sciences, Kerala, India.

References

1. Editorial. Not-so-deep impact. Nature. 2005;435:1003–4.
2. Malathi M, Thappa DM. The intricacies of impact factor and mid-term review of editorship. Indian J Dermatol Venereol Leprol. 2012;78:1–4.
3. Balhara YP. Publication: An essential step in research. Lung India. 2011;28:324–5.