

*Review Article***Publication a sole Academic Performance Indicator for Recruitment and Career Advancement. Is it right?**

Ramesh G, Nagarajappa R, Soni A

**Abstract:** The number of scientific articles authored by a researcher is the major criterion for the promotion, salary increments of faculty members and is one of the criteria in curriculum for completion of medical/dental postgraduate degree in India. This kind of process of scientific publications should be the means to upgrade the knowledge for academic excellence of faculty and students. But the overemphasis on publications being the sole eligibility criteria for academic jobs and promotions has led to pressure among professionals to publish and increased unfair practices especially among more inexperienced members of the profession. This paper is an attempt to throw light on the other requisites that can be considered to overcome unethical practices of publications to gain job and promotion.

Keywords: Dental; Faculty; Research; Scientific.

**INTRODUCTION**

A teaching faculty or the so called academician in India has to do multiple roles of a classroom teacher, a clinician cum instructor, a clinical supervisor, a student facilitator cum mentor, a researcher with good publication output, a postgraduate dissertation guide, a conference delegate/speaker and an undergraduate/postgraduate examiner.<sup>1</sup>

So measuring academic achievements and the quality of teachers is not an easy task, especially when individuals are assessed for promotions in several fields with differing job descriptions. Hence, objective criteria are required to measure the academic achievements.<sup>2</sup>

**DISCUSSION**

The recent amendments on having scientific publications as implemented by Dental Council of India (DCI) for promotion have led to desperate measures to increase publication by teaching faculties. The point system awarded to dental postgraduate teaching faculty by DCI to promote research work and academic development of PG students and faculty members has not only led to increase in publishing their scientific work, but also has gained the negative impacts of unfair practices in order to increase their chances of acceptance into various distinguished journals.<sup>3</sup>

The stress of getting publications has led to encourage unethical publication practices such as unjustified co-authorship,

plagiarism, and other publication misconduct, and also it has led to the spawning of a large number of “predatory scientific journals” which follow unethical editorial practices. These predatory publishers follow dishonest publication practices. The requirement for faculty and post graduates to publish has also led to another rat race among predatory publishers.<sup>4</sup>

The process of scientific publications supposed to be means to upgrade the knowledge of PG students and for academic excellence of faculty. But the overemphasis on publications being the sole eligibility criteria during PG studies, academic jobs and promotions has led to pressure among professionals to publish.<sup>5</sup> According to Graffithe (2009)<sup>6</sup> research data are a valuable long-term resource and that making them publicly available is a way to realize their potential value – both as part of the scholarly record or for re-use by others.<sup>6</sup>

Research, forms the basis for various decisions regarding investigations, diagnosis, and treatment. The ultimate aim of conducting research is to improve health and patient care, thereby serving the mankind. Teachers also need to publish their research in a peer-reviewed journal as we are fast approaching toward “publish or perish” principle adopted by the western countries.<sup>7</sup> There are other added benefits like any treatment instituted on the basis of published evidence in a peer-reviewed journal becomes a very good defense for

doctors in the court of law in cases of dispute.<sup>4</sup>

According to Verma et al. (2015)<sup>3</sup> scientific publications criteria of rewards in academic progression is also cannibalizing the higher education system. Hence through publications we have to impart, share knowledge, facilitate learning among the students, train the students in research methodology by means of research work, add to the results of existing research data and give the PG students experience in the art of publications.<sup>3</sup>

According to DCI point system, the first author in case report manuscripts and first two authors in research manuscripts are awarded more points than rest of co-authors for a given indexed published scientific article.<sup>8</sup>

It must also be remembered that the number of authors depends upon the complexity of the study and the number of centers involved in carrying out the particular research study. In multicentric studies, many a times the order of authorship is pre-decided on the basis of the number of participants enrolled at centers (with the investigator enrolling maximum number of participants listed first) or is assigned based on alphabetical order (based on the last name of participating investigators). None of these indicate that the contribution of authors listed later is significantly lower as compared to that of the first two authors!<sup>9</sup>

Original research articles on which a faculty member is first author, meaning he likely performed the majority of the experiments and wrote the article, or last author, meaning he led the research, tend to be the most heavily weighted publications when it comes to getting promoted. So how important are middle-author contributions when a scientist is up for promotion through the tenure track? According to Justin McArthur, director of the Department of Neurology and chair of the Professorial Promotions Committee at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Scientists from each institution usually play key roles in clinical trials and hence the middle-author publications should matter. Hence, even if they end up as middle

authors on the research articles describing these trials, their contributions will likely have a significant impact, and will be viewed favorably by a promotions committee.<sup>10</sup>

A candidate's middle-author contributions to research articles are often documented in a letter of recommendation written by her department director and faculty members of other universities, along with her curriculum vitae that is reviewed by a promotions committee. Alternatively, middle-author contributions can be described directly in the curriculum vitae. This will emphasize the promotions committees exactly what the candidate's middle-author contribution to a particular research article was says Bill Nelson, director of the Department of Oncology at Johns Hopkins. However, middle-author contributions alone don't get a faculty member promoted. However, important is the quality of the faculty member's publications and their impact on that person's field and not he set number of publications, middle-author or otherwise, that a faculty member must have in order to get promoted or hired.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to original research articles, McArthur notes that publications such as review articles, book chapters, online videos and educational websites also matter for promotion, more so if they have a great impact on the candidate's field. McArthur emphasizes that teaching, mentorship, citizenship, and nationally recognized leadership in one's field all matter a great deal, too.<sup>10</sup>

In India, the promotion is governed by the Career Advancement Scheme which has been developed by University Grants Commission (UGC) Guidelines and named as a system of Academic Performance Indicators (APIs) in this scheme. The API scores are based on the teacher's self-assessment that is based on objectively verifiable criteria and are finalized by the promotion screening/selection committee that follows certain categories for calculating APIs scores.<sup>[24]</sup> Category I includes teaching, learning and evaluation related activities. Category II includes co-curricular, extension and professional

development related activities. Category III includes research and academic contributions.<sup>11</sup>

Few top ranking foreign universities such as Harvard Medical School, Stanford Medical University, The John Hopkins School of Medicine and the University of Utah also follow excellent criteria and guidelines for appointment and promotion of faculty. Outstanding teaching is assessed by the quality of education provided and its impact on one's trainees, mentoring and teaching trainees and initiating projects that address important questions having the potential to change the practice of medicine or education. Clinical achievements include being known regionally or nationally as an expert clinician. The impact of these scholarly works on the health-care delivery and not the number is considered. The Hirsch (H) index is used for assessing the quality of publications.<sup>12</sup>

Research promotes basic knowledge, develops new drugs and instruments and provides guidance in planning health policies. The quality of teaching improves if the faculty is research oriented.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the DCI faculty appointment and promotion rule does not give due consideration and weightage for teaching, administrative and clinical achievements instead gives undue importance to publications. It should be well noted that these qualities are also extremely important for achieving excellence in teaching.

**CONCLUSION:** Hence, criteria for faculty appointment and promotion should not be based solely on one or two criteria such as publications. Assessment of a good teacher to promote him/her solely on these criteria is an injustice. Along with API score system, due weightage can be given to publications; nevertheless, it should not be the sole criteria. Weighted importance to all authors depending on their contribution to the research work needs to be given. It should form a suitable committee consisting of academicians from various institutes and invite suggestions from all the stakeholders to formulate criteria for appointment and promotion of teaching faculty.

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