

Moving Toward Application-Oriented Research System

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As the head of Pharmaceutical Sciences Research Centre and a member of the Editorial Board, I am delighted to preface this edition of IJPR, with appreciation of all the efforts behind it.

Health research should be considered as a tool to help policy makers, industries and others to tackle problems, improve the quality of life and build healthy communities. So, besides basic research, that has its own importance and is a necessity for high quality scientific research and nurturing good scientists, a part of research should be devoted to solve national health problems, especially when the resources are limited. I believe that even basic research should mainly be a foundation to deal with professional, industrial and commercial issues.

During past several years, due to lack of application-oriented research system, lots of research findings have been rendered useless and at most has been ended in a few publications at national or international levels without further benefit to the society.

Publication is a necessity and is the most important way of communication and exchange of ideas among the scientists and plays an important role in development of science. However, publication should not be considered as the main goal and end-point of research. In my opinion, a good research system should be mainly application-oriented, with publication only as a tool for dissemination of its findings or only as a by-product of research. In Western educational and research institutions, the quality of research is considered more important than the number of scientific publications. The Nobel Prize winning scientists are not usually those who have published more papers than their contemporaries. Unfortunately, our research system is still somehow publication-oriented. For example, for years, the so-called 'top researchers of the year' have been chosen mainly based on the number of publications of individuals and even the location of their name in the list of authors.

Another main problem in our research system has been lack of considerable demand for research and research results by pharmaceutical companies and health system planners; we suffer from lack of a strong and continuous industry-university relationship.

At least in the field of pharmacy and as I mentioned years ago (1997) at 'The 5th Iranian Conference of Pharmaceutical Sciences', of the best ways to increase the demand for the research by the manufacturers, would be competition among them, which has its own way and I am not going to talk about this issue here. A demand-oriented research system could result in development. In such a system, putting money in the research system and fulfilling the needs of the researchers (including both basic and applied) would be a beneficial investment. This should be one of the main policies of any research centre if the development of the country is the main aim. In addition, the grantee institutions are better to decide not to wait for the projects to come. Instead, they should work actively, try to find necessities and define their priorities of research and seek active collaboration with industries and competent researchers. The research centers can also attempt to solve this problem by diverting some of their researches toward problem-based fields.

I think we should change our way of thinking and move towards a system of research that fulfills the health care needs of human beings at national and international levels (application-oriented system). National level should be the top priority, especially when the resources are limited.

I am glad to hear that, after our suggestions, an application-oriented research system has been considered into the strategic planning and mission of the Shaheed Beheshti University of Medical Sciences. We are now trying to design different courses, collaborative projects and proposing them to pharmaceutical industries in accordance to the above mentioned points of view.

Finally I do hope you enjoy reading this edition of IJPR. I also would like to use this opportunity to say Happy New Year to all Iranians around the world and wish all the best for them.

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