

## Should Publication be the Only Means of Assessment?

Sir,

Publication in a peer-reviewed journal has become more lucrative than ever before. The number and type of publications are being used as a means of assessment

for deciding grant of research funding, recruitment into faculty positions, and subsequent promotions. Larger number of publications translates into greater recognition and better opportunities. The tenet nowadays is “publish or perish,” which pressurizes

academicians to publish as many papers as possible for their career growth. Even clinicians are publishing more than ever before to secure their positions and be considered for key positions.<sup>[1]</sup>

But should publication be the only means of assessment? In most of the medical academic institutes, there is a requirement of affording clinical duties in the hospital, administrative responsibilities, and teaching activities for undergraduates, postgraduates, and others. Being measured solely by “publication value” may result in reorienting priorities away from teaching and clinical work toward research. Not everyone may be inclined to publish voraciously, but may need to due to circumstances.

There are many controversies surrounding research publications themselves. Authorship issues are common. An author is generally considered to be someone who has made substantial contribution to a published study. As there is increase in the average number of authors listed in a scientific article, the authorship criteria laid down by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) are not always being followed. The occurrences of gift authorships (being given to someone who has not worked, but included to increase chances of acceptance) and ghost authorships (persons who have worked but not given credit) raise concern.<sup>[1]</sup> Moreover, how comparable are research papers from two different sources? The number of citations and impact factors are a rough estimate, which have been criticized for manipulation and incorrect application,<sup>[2]</sup> and both of them may not reflect the actual academic value of a paper. Even publications coming from the same journal in the same issue vary widely in the clinical utility and impact in changing practices. Other practices to increase publication output and importance have been documented such as splitting and self-referencing to

one’s own work. The requirement of an “indexed” publication is also raised, as there are a variety of indexing systems and it is hard to point out the best or an acceptable one.<sup>[2]</sup> Thus, relying only on publications may not be a fully justified means of assessment.

The question that arises further is what can be other mechanisms of assessment. The answer to that may not be straightforward. Other options include considering clinical achievements and experience, teaching expertise, community service, impact of the work, qualitative assessment of publications, and others. It is incumbent upon the regulatory and sponsoring authorities such as the Medical Council of India and others to consider whether the present method is the best one, or another holistic approach can be promulgated.


**Bichitra Nanda Patra, Siddharth Sarkar**

Department of Psychiatry, PGIMER, Chandigarh, India

**Address for correspondence:** Dr. Bichitra Nanda Patra,  
Department of Psychiatry, PGIMER, Chandigarh - 160 012, India.  
E-mail: patrab.aiims@gmail.com

## REFERENCES

1. Bavdekar SB. Authorship issues. *Lung India* 2012;29:76-80.
2. Balhara YP. Indexed journal: What does it mean? *Lung India* 2012;29:193.

Access this article online	
<b>Website:</b> www.ijpm.info	<b>Quick Response Code</b> 
<b>DOI:</b> 10.4103/0253-7176.112224	