

Research and Study about Liver Diseases in Iran: Past, Present and Future

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In each country, development and progress can only be achieved through long-term planning and moving purposefully in the planned direction. In order to make Iran the first scientific power in the region, there should be a comprehensive collaboration and alliance among thinkers and decision makers since research and study are believed to be the main parts of knowledge creation and propagation. Fortunately, after the revolution, knowledge growth has been accelerated for many reason, especially due to independence from other powers. Doubtlessly, researchers have contributed largely to this great achievement and have brought much glory for our country. Preventing, controlling and treating important diseases can only be done through research and investigation since medicine is one of the few sciences that is in such close relationship with research that nothing can be stated without prior studies (1, 2). A perspective of researchers' activities in different fields of medicine can act as a guide for other related groups.

Liver diseases, as a mutual entity between gastroenterologists and infectionists, include viral hepatitis, chronic liver diseases, metabolic diseases (NASH), liver malignancies and diseases of the liver immune system (3-9). A glance at the above-mentioned shows that viral hepatitis has been the subject of most researches between 2000 and 2007. Fortunately, paying more attention to such infections plays an important role in preventing and controlling this group of contagious diseases in our society (10). The least importance in such studies,

however, has been given to liver cancers although they are financially very burdensome for the country in terms of incidence and control and are also accompanied by many drug adverse effects. Research centers, as parts of regional research and study institutions, are the body of organisation and execution of required research projects in the country (8, 9).

As collaboration and partnership can result in more knowledge production and science creation, undertaking joint projects and publishing joint papers should be scored higher. In this regard, papers published between 2000 and 2007 by Iranian researchers can be divided in two groups. Unfortunately, most of them (70%) are unicentric but it is possible to put an end to the wasting of manpower, financial resources and educational and research systems through accurate planning made by research and technology policy makers. Defining a separate assignment description for each research center and putting together all resources can change local projects to national ones, increasing knowledge production coefficient and researchers' capabilities (7, 11). Another issue to be discussed is the individual share of each research center in hepatologic studies. From this point of view, it can be concluded that centers with more joint projects with other institutes have a more prominent role and a greater share in hepatologic studies which itself helps bigger centers to expand and smaller center to become more powerful. Another weak point is the lack of a unique affiliation for each research center which requires

the immediate attention of the policy makers of those centers. Having different affiliations for one center or even one researcher decreases the coefficient of knowledge production for those centers and researchers since evaluation and scoring is done by automatic search engines.

Websites such as ISI only look for one affiliation for each individual or center; therefore, minor mistakes in writing affiliations prevents them from being evaluated and scored while false negatives in the rating of Iran's scientific status can be simply corrected by being more attentive. The rating we currently hold among all universities in the world is not reflective of our real place which is in part due to mistakes in writing and registering affiliations. Another issue in hepatologic studies in our country is the tendency of the authors to publish their papers in domestic or regional journals that are indexed in creditable and valid databases. While it is a plus for the researchers and helps foreign scientists with benefiting from them, it should be taken into consideration that having a domestic inclusive bank of hepatologic papers in persian can assist us to develop this knowledge in our country ⁽¹²⁾.

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