

Too Many Students' Congresses, Are They Necessary and Useful?

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Dear Editor,

Participation of students in medical research would increase the quality and quantity of research in a durable manner (1). Research training is one of the most important components of medical education; as the American Association of Medical Colleges recommends that medical students can develop their problem-solving skills by participating in research projects (2). Currently, students perform many research activities and thus they might be highly motivated to present their results in medical congresses in front of professors and other colleagues. Thereby, they might learn about presenting a research project as well as conveying their research experiences during such congresses. In addition, organizing a medical research congress and research workshops are valuable experiences that would help students in their future lives.

Before 2007, the annual congress of medical students was the only available congress for Iranian medical students in which they could present their research results

in a competitive manner. After national meeting of students' research committees in 2007 in Shiraz, research committees were divided into six regional networks, each one comprised of seven to eight medical universities. Thereafter, six local and one national medical students' congresses are held annually, including the north, west, south, east, centre and Tehran network congresses (3). In addition to such congresses, some of the specialty congresses such as national immunology or paediatrics congresses include a young investigator's or students' part.

On the other hand, the many annual students' congresses are inundated with the lack of international students' congresses in Iran. As a matter of fact, four congresses have been held in the first five months of 2012 (4); however, no international speakers attended the previous international congress in Isfahan (SICOB AIR 2011). Although organizing four congresses during five months with more than 300 presented abstracts apiece, highlights the substantial improvement of national students' research, but the cost of maintenance and human resources for each congress should also be taken into consideration. Hence the costs for upholding every congress are considerably high; the advantageous impacts of student congresses should also be appraised. In this regard, critical statistics

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such as the number of presented abstracts that have been published in high quality journals or the scientometric properties of presented studies should be investigated. One way to improve the quality of students' research is to allocate more resources on more research prizes and grants, instead of upholding costly annual congresses. Considering the dominance of quality upon quantity in students' research, facilitating young researchers' participation in summer schools and exchange program where they have the opportunity for education in an international atmosphere could be of great advantage. In conclusion, we should consider the quality and novelty of presented science as the pivotal elements of students' congresses, which would eventually result in enhanced students' research skills nationally.

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