



ISSN: 0976-3031

Available Online at <http://www.recentscientific.com>

International Journal of Recent Scientific Research
Vol. 7, Issue, 10, pp. 13654-13657, October, 2016

**International Journal of
Recent Scientific
Research**

Research Article

PERCEPTIONS OF MEDICAL TEACHERS ON RESEARCH PUBLICATION GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTIONS BY MEDICAL COUNCIL OF INDIA

Sachin M Satpute., Manthan N Mehta., Kiran R Deshmukh., Kumardeep B Paul and Sandeep B Bhete

Department of Pharmacology, Topiwala National Medical College & BYL Nair Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 18th July, 2016
Received in revised form 10th August, 2016
Accepted 06th September, 2016
Published online 28th October, 2016

Key Words:

Medical Education, Publications, Authorship, Promotions

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Medical Council of India (MCI) is responsible for maintaining high standards of medical education in India. The Medical Council assesses the quality of medical education through medical teachers. Publication of at least two research papers is mandatory for promotion to the post of Associate Professor and Professor. However, the MCI recently issued a guideline followed by a clarification as to what counts as research publications. This has raised several issues and the guidelines have faced criticism. The present study aims to understand the perceptions of medical teachers to this clarification on research publication guidelines.

Methods: This was a cross-sectional, observational, questionnaire-based study in 153 medical teachers of a tertiary care hospital carried out during February and March 2016. A pre-validated questionnaire was filled by the participants in 30 minutes. The data was collected and analysed using numbers & percentages.

Results: Most of the teachers either agree (37.9%) or strongly agree (52.28%) that indexing criteria should involve other acceptable and reputed index agencies. A large number of medical teachers are in agreement that credit points should also be awarded to publications other than original articles. (92.8%). The majority of them (88.9%) believe that limiting credit to the first two authors is too restrictive and would hamper collaborative and multi-disciplinary research. Most of them (90%) fear that senior academicians might use their position to secure prime authorship.

Conclusion: The intentions of the MCI to streamline the process of promotion of medical teachers is perceived in good light. However, the ambiguities in these guidelines for research publications are evident from the perceptions of medical teachers as shown in this study. There is a need to rethink, relook and revise the current guidelines.

Copyright © Sachin M Satpute *et al.*, 2016, this is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

INTRODUCTION

The assessment of the performance of medical teachers is a difficult task. However, it should be fair and just. The underlying aim of such assessment should be to improve the quality of medical teaching and medical research.^[1] The Medical Council of India (MCI) is the statutory body entrusted with the responsibility of establishing and maintaining high standards of medical education.^[2] It has laid down certain guidelines for appointments and promotions of teachers in medical institutions in India. Publication of research articles is one of the essential requirements for promotion of medical teachers.^[3] The MCI's initial guidelines for promotion to the position of Associate Professor and Professor required publication of at least two research papers by the candidates.^[4] Though the intention was to streamline the process of

promotion of teachers and give impetus as well as due credit to research in academic institutions, the 'clarification' issued by MCI in September 2015 on what constitutes 'research publications' for promotion of teaching faculty of medical colleges/institutions in India^[5] has sparked a controversy and is a matter of debate among medical teachers. This clarification has raised several issues with regards to index agencies, type of articles to be considered, criteria for National/International journal, authorship, and e-journals.

While an editorial in the Indian Journal of Medical Ethics, labelled this circular as a regressive trend by MCI,^[1] an editorial in the Journal of Postgraduate Medicine questioned whether this was the right way to consider research publications for academic advancement.^[2] A special editorial by some of the editors of the Indian Association of Medical

*Corresponding author: Sachin M Satpute

Department of Pharmacology, Topiwala National Medical College & BYL Nair Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

Journal Editors stated the need for a rethink with respect to the revised guidelines.^[3]

With this background in mind, the present study was planned to understand and compare the perceptions of medical teachers to the clarification on research publication guidelines by Medical Council of India (MCI) for promotion.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We carried out this cross-sectional, observational questionnaire-based study in an urban tertiary care hospital from February 2016 to March 2016. All medical teachers willing to participate in the study were handed out a pre-validated questionnaire.

A duration of 30 minutes was given to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions grouped under 5 headings, viz. index agencies, type of articles to be considered, criteria for national/international journals, authorship, and e-journals. Each part had 2 to 5 statements on which a scaled response was noted (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, strongly disagree). The name of the department, designation, years of teaching experience and number of publications was also noted. The filled questionnaires were then analysed. Questionnaires not returned within the stipulated time, incompletely filled or multiple responses for single response questions were not analysed.

Sample Size Calculation

The total number of medical teachers in the institute were approximately 253. Assuming 95% confidence interval, with an alpha error of 5%, a sample size of 153 was calculated. [Calculated using www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.html]

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive data was represented as numbers & percentages. The analysis was done using Microsoft Excel 2013 and GraphPadInstat 3.

RESULTS

One hundred and fifty-three completely filled questionnaires were collected from medical teachers of various departments with different designations of an urban tertiary care teaching hospital over a period of one month.

Of the 153 medical teachers, 17 were Professors, 65 were Associate Professors and 71 were Assistant Professors.

The teaching experience was in the range of 1-35 years. (Mean±SD= 10.86±7.97).

The mean number of publications were 9.47.

Table 1 Frequency of Responses to statements on Index Agencies

Index agencies	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Indexing criteria should involve other acceptable and reputed index agencies.	80 (52.28%)	58 (37.90%)	10 (6.53%)	05 (3.26%)	00
2. Publications in index journals gives more value.	39 (29.49%)	85 (55.56%)	19 (12.41%)	10 (6.53%)	00

Values described in brackets are in percentages.

The single- best response on a graded scale was noted for 15 statements. The grading was as follows: Strongly Agree, Agree, Not Sure, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

The responses obtained for statements with respect to the Index Agencies are shown in Table 1.

Most medical teachers strongly agree that indexing criteria should involve other acceptable and reputed index agencies (52.28%) and agree that publications in index journals gives more value. (55.56%)

The responses obtained with respect to type of articles to be considered for promotion are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2 Frequency of Responses to statements on Type of Articles to be considered

Type of articles to be considered	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Case reports, editorials, reviews contribute to science.	76 (49.67%)	53 (34.64%)	18 (11.76%)	00	06 (3.92%)
2. Omission of meta-analyses and systematic reviews is justified.	00	55 (35.94%)	32 (20.94%)	51 (33.34%)	15 (9.80%)
3. Credit points should also be awarded to publications other than original articles.	80 (52.28%)	62 (40.52%)	05 (3.26%)	06 (3.92%)	00

A large number of medical teachers (49.67%) consider that case reports, editorials, reviews, etc. contribute to science. A mixed response was obtained for the omission of meta-analyses and systematic reviews. (35.94% agree & 33.34% disagree). More than half of the medical teachers (52.28%) believe that credit points should also be awarded to publications other than original articles.

The responses obtained for criteria of national and international journals for publications are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Frequency of Responses to statements on Criteria for National & International journals

Criteria for National/International journals	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Discrimination of publications in national/international journals is justified.	17 (11.11%)	42 (27.45%)	16 (10.45%)	68 (44.44%)	10 (6.53%)
2. National journals publish research that is more relevant to the local population.	34 (22.22%)	75 (49.01%)	44 (28.76%)	00	00

Most medical teachers (44.44%) disagree to the discrimination of publications in national and international journals. A large number of medical teachers (49.01%) agree and 22.22% of them strongly agree that national journals publish research that is more relevant to the local population.

The responses obtained for authorship criteria are depicted in Table 4.

The responses for criteria on e-journals is shown in Table 5. Most medical teachers strongly agree that e-journals give access to knowledge regardless of location (53.60%). They also strongly agree that e-journals are cost-effective and eco-friendly (63.40%). Majority medical teachers strongly agree

that e-journals with reputed indexing should be considered for performance assessment (52.94%).

Table 4 Frequency of Responses to statements on Criteria for Authorship

Criteria for authorship	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Limiting credit to the 1 st and 2 nd author is too restrictive.	92 (60.13%)	44 (28.76%)	17 (11.11%)	00	00
2. Author with significant contribution should get due credit as 1 st or 2 nd author.	62 (40.52%)	91 (59.48%)	00	00	00
3. Collaborative and multi-disciplinary research would be affected by limiting credit to the first 2 authors.	109 (71.24%)	44 (28.75%)	00	00	00
4. Senior academicians might use their position to secure 1 st / 2 nd authorship.	88 (57.51%)	50 (32.68%)	05 (3.26%)	10 (6.53%)	00
5. Names of contributing authors in alphabetical order acknowledges each one's contribution equally.	05 (3.26%)	57 (37.25%)	20 (13.07%)	38 (24.84%)	33 (21.57%)

Table 5 Frequency of Responses to statements on Criteria for e-journals

Criteria for e-journals	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. e-Journals give access to knowledge regardless of location.	82 (53.60%)	71 (46.40%)	00	00	00
2. e-Journals are cost-effective and eco-friendly.	97 (63.40%)	56 (36.60%)	00	00	00
3. e-Journals with reputed indexing should be considered for performance assessment.	81 (52.94%)	72 (47.05%)	00	00	00

No correlation was seen between the designation of medical teachers and their statements nor was any correlation obtained between the years of teaching experience, a number of publications and responses obtained.

DISCUSSION

The clarification issued by the Medical Council of India on research publication guidelines for promotion raised certain issues. However, most issues have been discussed as editorials in various journals. The perceptions and opinions of medical teachers in an urban tertiary teaching hospital have not been summarized in any journal, to the best of my knowledge.

We did a questionnaire based survey of 153 medical teachers and studied their perceptions to the new guidelines issued by the Medical Council of India. We found that most medical teachers have similar opinions to the various issues raised through this circular.

A large number of medical teachers either agree or strongly agree that indexing criteria should involve other acceptable and reputed index agencies besides the ones mentioned in the MCI circular. Most of the medical teachers believe that publications

in index journals give more value and credibility. The quality of journals cannot be solely adjudged on indexing and inclusion in select databases. [3] However, there is no direct measure of quality when it comes to publications in journals. Since indexation and quality are subjective criteria, a broader list of approved index agencies should be suggested since most teachers believe that index journals have more value.

Most medical teachers are of the opinion that case reports, editorials, and reviews contribute to science. The proposal to award points only to original research articles leads to a wrong notion that other sections of journals which deal with critical thinking and independent scientific outlook do not carry any value. This will either result in malpractices or a further decline in the overall outlook of medical teachers to publications and the Medical Council of India. A mixed opinion was obtained with respect to the omission of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. Some of them agree to the omission while some of them disagree. One-third of medical teachers are not sure whether this omission is justified. More than 90% medical teachers are of the opinion that credit points should be awarded to publications other than original articles. Thus, the Medical Council of India should re-look into this debatable issue and not neglect other forms of scientific communications as they are equally important.

A large number of medical teachers feel that discrimination of publications in national and international journals is not justified. More than half of them agree that national journals publish research that is more relevant to the local population. The terms national or International do not define the quality of a journal. The unclear distinction between national and international journals in spite of index criteria for publication makes the 'clarification' unclear.

The new circular limits credit to the first two authors only. This is too restrictive and none of the medical teachers disagree to this. Though almost all medical teachers feel that author with significant contribution should get due credit as the first or second author, they believe that collaborative and multi-disciplinary research would be affected by limiting credit to the first two authors. More than half of them also believe that senior academicians might use their position unfairly to secure first or second authorship. This move by the Medical Council of India might bring a halt to gift authorship. On the other hand, this move could lead to the complete discrediting of junior researchers, since the senior academicians might not give due credit to juniors as a first or second author. This flipside is what most medical teachers are wary of, according to our survey. To avoid this competition for first and/or second authorship, we enquired if medical teachers believed that names of contributing authors in alphabetical order acknowledges each one's contribution equally. We obtained mixed responses for this statement, but there was an inclination towards the agreement side. This shows that a large number of medical teachers do research not only for promotions but also to contribute to science.

In this era of digitalization, most journals are being published only in the electronic format. The medical Council of India, however, excludes publications in e-journals for the purpose of promotions. In our study, we questioned medical teachers with respect to the importance of e-journals in the modern era. We

found that all medical teachers either agree or strongly agree that e-journals give access to knowledge regardless of location. They firmly believe that e-journals are cost-effective and eco-friendly. All medical teachers suggested that e-journals with reputed indexing should be considered for performance assessment.

A uniform response was obtained for most questions with respect to the circular issued by the Medical Council of India. A larger nation-wide study could be planned in the near future to include more medical teachers. Their suggestions could bring about certain changes in the current guidelines.

CONCLUSION

The present study voices the opinions of medical teachers in response to the new circular. Though the intentions of the Medical Council of India to evaluate teachers on basis of research publications is seen in positive light, certain ambiguities and issues need to be resolved. This study gives an impetus to the Medical Council of India to rethink, relook and revise the current guidelines. These guidelines not only affect promotions or research, it affects the medical education system and the medical profession at large.

References

1. Bandewar SVS, Pai SA. Regressive trend: MCI's approach to assessment of medical teachers' performance. *Indian J Med Ethics*. 2015 Oct-Dec; 12(4) 192-5.
2. Bavdekar S B, Tullu M S. Research publications for academic career advancement: An idea whose time has come. But is this the right way?. *J Postgrad Med* 2016;62:1-3
3. Aggarwal R, Gogtay N, Kumar R, Sahni P. The Revised Guidelines of the Medical Council of India for Academic Promotions: Need for a Rethink. *Indian Pediatrics* 2016 (53): 23-26.
4. Medical Council of India. Minimum Qualifications for Teachers in Medical Institutions Regulations, 1998 (Amended upto May 2015) Available from: <http://www.mciindia.org/Rules-and-Regulation/TEQ-REGULATIONS-16.05.15.pdf> [Accessed March 25th 2016].
5. Medical Council of India. Circular No. MCI-12(1)/2015-TEQ/131880. Available from: <http://www.mciindia.org/circulars/Circular-03.09.2015-TEQ-Promotion-Publication.pdf> [Accessed March 25th 2016].

How to cite this article:

Sachin M Satpute et al. 2016, Perceptions of Medical Teachers on Research Publication Guidelines For Promotions By Medical Council of India. *Int J Recent Sci Res*. 7(10), pp. 13654-13657.