



Change as an opportunity - Collaborative research in a fluctuating global landscape

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Dear Editor,

We note with great enthusiasm the advances to the medical field that have been brought about by international collaboration between medical researchers in different countries. Collaboration occurs when “2 or more entities work together to produce a desired and shared outcome” (1). Literature on the topic notes specifically the strategic alignment of global partnerships with global health priorities, (2) and how international collaboration advances these goals through research teams working together on such projects. Indeed, it is not only in research, but also in medical practice and education where important strides are often made by observing and importing the healthcare and education practices of other countries (3).

The medical community in Iran has contributed admirably to the global advancement of medicine. According to the Scopus index, in 2015 Iran ranked first for the number of scientific papers published and number of citations, both in its region and among all Islamic countries (4). Furthermore, the research ranking of Iranian Universities has been consistently high and improving over time (5).

However, in a constantly fluctuating global landscape, it may become increasingly difficult for Iranian institutions to maintain international

collaborative efforts over time, and to build new ones. With the introduction of US travel restrictions for Iranians (amongst others), travel to the US for conferences, research projects, observerships, etc. have become significantly more problematic (6). Naturally, this is likely to negatively affect the Iranian medical community in its efforts and advancements. The networks and connections made at international meetings throughout the world can act as a gateway to collaborative projects and research. In reducing the capacity for Iranian scientists to involve themselves, there is an inherent risk to the capacity for progression of medical research and practice in Iran.

Considering the value of the Iranian medical community and the challenges it faces, we urge strengthening of the efforts for collaboration among its scientists and medical practitioners and the rest of the world. An opportunity exists for ties to be formed and relationships to be strengthened where they previously were weak or non-existent. At Imperial College London, we note wholeheartedly the many members of faculty and frontline medical staff who have come from Iran, bringing tangible advances to their specialist fields. We believe there is now a chance to reinforce this scientific relationship. Cross-collaboration through medical conferences,

mutual travel grants to other countries, and active participation of scientists and clinicians of Iranian descent can all be utilised to fortify this relationship. One particular aspect that may be used is the strength of Iran within medical biotechnology (7). Moreover, partnerships in newer fields, such as remote healthcare procedures and services, represent another chance to overcome the difficulties in travel faced by Iranian scientists.

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

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