

Scientific racism as a public health emergency of global concern

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In recent times, several top-tier journals have published notes, comments, and editorials concerning several aspects of the pervasive systemic scientific racism that exists within the scientific community. This discourse spans a broad spectrum, including the composition of editorial committees,¹ racial disparity in the health care system,² calls against ending racism and marginalization in jobs,³ imbalance authorships between low- and high-income countries,⁴ bias in research and scholarship perpetuated by white-predominant institutions,⁵ and disparities in research funding.⁶ Although systemic racism is deeply entrenched in the field of science, the global protests following George Floyd's murder on May 25, 2020, along with the struggles of those impacted by racism, discrimination, and injustice (3), have inspired a renewed sense of hope within the scientific community. This wave of activism has both highlighted the issue and suggested strategies to reduce and ultimately eradicate scientific racism.

Although scientific racism is mostly documented in African Americans,⁷ this issue expands over science professionals of almost any minority ethnic population. This phenomenon might contribute to, or even be the main reason why these communities have been unable to grow and become empowered in the scientific world. In a powerful editorial from *Cell*, the editors recognized the lack of African-American scientists on their board. They emphasized the work that should be done to enable African-American scientists to be part of the editorial committees of scientific journals.¹ Nevertheless, the Latin scientific community is discriminated and the most common discriminatory filters are the authors' surname and country of origin. Lack of invitations to belong as members of editorial committees or as editor-in-chief is a discreet way of exclusion. These factors frequently contribute to ongoing inequality, hindering the acceptance of papers that may be valuable and relevant to specific topics.

Among the 6000 most highly cited researchers, only 0.53% (32 scientists) are Latin Americans. This data published by Clarivate Analytics is based on information from more than 33,000 journals between 2006 and 2016. Brazil contributes the majority with 15 of those 32 scientists, while Mexico only provides 8 of the most cited scientists.⁸ While this data may not explicitly indicate scientific racism, it may instead highlight issues such as inadequate funding, unequal opportunities, and diminished representation within international scientific communities. As previously highlighted, the underrepresentation of authors from low-income countries persists in the literature, where the authors from high-income countries dominate,⁴ and thus becomes a dangerous form of supremacy that needs to be removed within all spaces, within countries, between countries, and at the global level.⁹ In the scientific community, individuals with potentially innovative contributions but less visibility often find it challenging to receive recognition; meritocracy can be overshadowed by implicit bias and racism.

In the scientific community racism may be influenced by the institutions and organizations, that perpetuate racism consciously or unconsciously, and the internalization of racism within-individual.¹⁰ Today, it is important that we put aside the search for economic, social, scientific, and technological supremacy, and look into the future together. Supporting, enhancing, and improving scientific research regardless of origin, socioeconomic status, skin color, or disability, must become one of the current goals throughout the world. The first step should not be limited to top-tier journals but most of the journals (institutional racism), which in their commitment to their readers, reviewers, authors, and colleagues should be ready to listen and amplify the voices of the members from any discriminated community (interpersonal racism). A good example was the call made by The Lancet Global Health.⁴ We foresee that the scientists from these discriminated communities will be eager to take part in any concrete action for correcting global discrimination at all existing levels and gradually eliminate systemic racism in any scientific community.

The Lancet Group and Elsevier have committed to antiracism at all levels, including addressing scientific



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racism. The Lancet Group has focused on racial and ethnic inequality by incorporating 11 editors from diverse backgrounds, leading to the establishment of their Group for Racial Equality (GRaCE). Meanwhile, Elsevier has reaffirmed its dedication to promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion, formally pledging to eliminate systemic racism in health and research. There has been a gradual decline in overt racial discrimination within the scientific community. Journals have amplified the representation of Latin American scientists in global scientific discourse. By reducing financial barriers and fostering inclusivity, there is a call to dismantle structural racism in academia and to ensure that diverse voices, particularly Latin American scientists, are heard and valued.¹¹ Ioannidis and colleagues analyzed data from 100,000 top scientists.¹² The database, derived from Scopus, includes representation from Latin American scientists, reflecting their contributions across various scientific disciplines. This inclusion highlights the growing recognition of Latin American researchers in the global scientific community. The authors emphasize the importance of field-adjusted metrics to ensure fair evaluation, particularly for scientists from regions with historically lower citation densities, including Latin American scientists. We will strive to collaborate on journals to advance scientific knowledge in this field.

Contributors

FJ–T: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Writing—original draft, Writing—review & editing. JLC–E and KLJ–G: Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Project administration, Validation, Resources, Supervision, Writing—original draft, Writing—review & editing. GC–M, SR–V and TL–N: Data curation, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Supervision, Validation, Writing—original draft, Writing—review & editing.

The decision to submit the manuscript was made by FJ–T.

Declaration of interests

The author(s) declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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