

## Establishing a Libyan Medical Research Council is Urgently Needed

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To the Editor: I read with interest the study by Bakoush et al addressing the issue of medical publication in Libya [1]. The number of published reports from Libya was compared with another three Arabic countries (Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen). I suggest to the authors the extension of their study to include all twenty-three Arabic countries. This would enhance our knowledge of the scientific productivity of the Arab world.

I would like to add a result of an exercise I conducted to establish the contribution of Libya in the field of Neurological publications. The PubMed was searched to identify all the neurological publications affiliated to Libya. Twenty-two published reports were identified [2-23]. The publications fell into three categories: original work (n=16), clinical series (n=2) and case reports (n=4). All the original reports were epidemiological studies and no basic sciences publication was found. Publication dates ranged from 1963-1995. There was one published report in the 1960s, nil in the 1970s, sixteen in the 1980s, five in the 1990s and not a single report for the last 12 years. There were eighty-three named authors in all the published articles, of which twenty-four were Libyans (29%). The first author was Libyan only in two publications (10%).

The above observation is in line with what Bakoush et al [1] elegantly showed in their study that the Libyan universities, academics and research centres have low academic publications. In the discussion section of their study Bakoush and colleagues proposed some measures to improve the research culture in the country. They proposed reformation of the promotion process in the universities by establishing reasonable criteria for attaining the higher academic positions and introducing the undergraduate medical students to the research culture at a very early stage. I endorse their ideas but like to point out the urgent need to establish a "Libyan Medical Research Council". The main mission of such a council is to promote, encourage, supervise, and fund the medical research both in basic medical sciences as well as clinical ones. This proposed body should be totally independent and staffed by highly regarded academics. The process of applying for and granting funds must be decided on merit and merit only. Complete transparency in the funding process is absolutely essential.

The issue of medical research and academia in general is crucial if Libya is to join the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The different Libyan authorities have to take

seriously the challenge of moving the Libyan universities and research centres forward; otherwise our country will lag behind its peers not to mention the developed world.

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