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Scientific sanctions: a catastrophe for the civilised world

Nowadays, Iranians are being subjected to the strictest sanctions ever imposed against a country. The political deadlock between six international powers and Iranian officials has resulted in a proliferation of sanctions touching all aspects of Iranian activities. Economic sanctions have caused intolerable suffering to the people and now, another type of sanctions has been foisted on us – scientific sanctions.

I am not a politician, but as a young physician, committed to research and engaged in scientific publishing, am deeply afraid for humanity and civilisation. Science has now been reined in. During the past year, I have sensed the increasing pressure on the scientists in my country to report the results of their surveys. I cannot understand why the scientific community tolerates the pressure mounted by politicians to compromise the independence, purity and honesty of science, which is now being undermined.

During the past year, I have experienced many difficulties in publishing articles. Surveys which could have been published in the best international journals and helped all scientists

around the world to continue to improve the quality of human life and our knowledge were rejected. My articles have been rejected, even after frequent revisions, without any reasonable excuse. In one instance, a Canadian journal rejected my article after one year and three sessions of revisions, claiming that the article possibly had some limitations which had not been reported. An interesting question is why was such a decision not taken after the first revision itself? And why were doubts cast on our honesty when we were reporting on a registered clinical trial? The question arises as to whether journals can be assured of the honesty of the researchers involved in all American or European surveys.

Another problem faced by us was that of banking sanctions. These sanctions made the payment of publication fees and offprint requests impossible and thus, the number of journals we could submit our articles to shrank. Elsevier as well as Taylor and Francis have officially announced that they will impose these sanctions (1,2).

My country has suffered such problems frequently in recent decades. We have a rich history and our civilisation and culture go back thousands of years. As Isaac Newton said, we stand on the shoulders of giants, giants such as Avicenna and Razi, the Iranian pioneers in science. We do not want to restrict our capabilities, but it seems that the international community wants us to. This is a catastrophe for civilisation and science, and will stand out as a blemish in the history of science.

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