

Re: Biomedical Publications Profile and Trends in Gulf Cooperation Council Countries

رد على: شاكلة المنشورات الطبية الحيوية وإتجاهاتها في دُول مجلس التّعاون الخليجي

Sir,

I congratulate Al-Maawali *et al.*¹ for their efforts to identify the factors that influence the publication record of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This analysis will help plan ways to improve the current situation. As a colleague who has lectured in all the GCC countries and who strongly believes that they can improve their scores I would like to make a few comments.

First, one indicator of research output can be monitored with very little effort. The Institute for Scientific Information's (ISI) *Essential Science Indicators* provides a list of ranking by country. The results listed below represent the status on 1st March 2012 in the field of *Clinical Medicine*. These "metrics" are updated every 2 months and reflect performance over the past 11 years. Greece is added for comparison being a small and relatively poor country when compared with the GCC members. The population of Greece is 11.3 million (2010 census).² This is less than one third of the population of the GCC countries combined (2010 censuses).³⁻⁸

Rank	Country	Publications	Citations	Citations/publication
44	Saudi Arabia	6,505	32,150	4.94
68	Kuwait	1,995	12,441	6.24
72	UAE	1,348	9,659	7.17
103	Oman	741	3,287	4.44
105	Qatar	616	3,058	4.96
25	Greece	25,702	271,094	10.55

Second, as Al-Maawali and colleagues¹ correctly state many factors influence research performance as can be clearly seen from the results listed above. Additional factors are experience in research. Possibly, this can be acquired by collaboration with established groups. Several decades ago there may have been a need to import clinical expertise to the region and to export trainees. I do not think that there is now much need to improve clinical expertise because of the high local standards. In contrast, it may be time to expand and improve research performance.

Third, it is regrettably necessary to mention that the performance of some GCC countries, in terms of citations, is lower than that of several thousand *individual* researchers listed in the ISI's *Essential Science Indicators*. This observation confirms the need for progress as stated by Al-Maawali *et al.*¹

Fourth, Al-Maawali *et al.*¹ make several perceptive comments concerning local journals and the recognition of work carried out in GCC countries. For local journals, an extensive international editorial board is mandatory. For recognition, collaborative research would compensate for the inappropriate negative bias shown by some editors/reviewers based in other countries. This suggestion can include joint supervision of doctoral degrees and even conjoint awards with universities abroad. I would also recommend a thesis

programme based on publications to ensure high standards.² Such theses would be based on peer reviewed published work and would therefore stand firm against any international scrutiny.

A key factor determining success is enthusiasm. This factor is already present because I met many colleagues in the region who share my enthusiasm!

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