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Short Report

Refined Egoism and SCI Scandals in China

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The recent astonishing SCI scandals are unquestionably a failure of the robustness of research ethics policies and the integrity of publication in China. We present the paradox of refined egoism and a hallmark system faced toward wiping out Chinese hospitals' SCI scandals.

The Paradox

China most hospital doctors must have SCI publications to get honored or promoted, which has led to cheating cases and scandal. Research-type hospital in China burgeons but lacks a standard fair promotion track for researchers. Departments recruit top-tier talent to produce the hospital's "own" SCI publications, which sometimes high-ranked officers with neither sufficient time, talent nor authentic interest in research could like to take major credit for, some of which might even have helped officers for their doctoral degrees. indicating the need for restructuring. Nevertheless, Nobel laureates Tou Youyou and the "father of hybrid rice", rice scientist Yuan Longping, previously lacked SCI publications. In addition, some officers should document the proof of lab-journals and lab-meeting records in print for around 10 years and even longer electrically for their research achievements.

Refined Egoism

Most research in China is not in question. The problem is the phenomenon of refined egoism, reflected by "famous" researchers' recent retractions. Some people to sacrifice integrity to reputation and money. By manipulating their images, they outcompete hard-working researchers and damage the scientific community. Copyright and patent protection within hospital research teams must be improved. In addition, "whom you know matters" for promotion and academic titles [1]. In research hospitals, if top officers become "predatory", nobody dares speak out. Desperate "contractors" under pressure eventually resort to low-quality research and fudged data, leading to scandals. We (both the government and the press) could have a quantitative guideline for minimizing the "contracted" work in research papers; otherwise indicating "advertisement" or alike.

Wiping out SCI scandal in China will help the world. China ranks second for total publications and oversized retractions [2]. Importantly, this indirectly caused challenging on historically famous innovations in China, e.g. Zhang-heng seismograph. However, many Nobel laureates (e.g. Dr. David Baltimore, Dr. Martin Chalfie, and Dr. Francis Arnold) have retracted their papers promptly when they detected errors. In light of China's powerful executive system, we could create an inspection system of a grace period for retraction without penalty, followed by heavy penalties for untimely or no retractions.

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A Hallmark System

China research integrity policy seems to perfect its discipline code but too good to be executable. It lacks an effective system of high-quality credit-responsibility feedback loops, expert-panel optimization, self-correction and self-improvement. The Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology and the National Natural Science Foundation China (NSFC) have feedback systems but they cannot detect and penalize anomalies like “hidden bribery” or “exceptional”-connections. However, it is evolving. For instance, Shenzhen’s San-Ming Project’s annual report included feedbacks to improve its research evaluation. Latest NSFC guideline starts to give credit for high-quality evaluation for proposals. The Swiss model, where some professors have lifelong contracts and academic independence, would allow them to speak the truth fearlessly. We need a hallmark system to assess anomalies and determine whether they indicate scandals. Intelligent mutualism could be better to take over refined egoism.

Where To?

The current prestigious academic title-elect system of SCI publications excludes local top scientists like Dr. Tou Youyou but would favor those with connections or holding administrative positions in Chinese academy of Engineering (latest elected includes 4 chancellors in universities, 2 presidents from famous hospitals, 4 directors in key labs or research institutes), over which a healthier academic environment would reward more skills, digging mechanisms with a focus, and milestones or breakthroughs as newly-established Hangzhou Xi-Hu University [1, 3-5]. Knowledge may result in the power of position, but the position difficultly empowers the knowledge in China. On the contrary, powerful position could manage silencing the scandals rather than supporting timely treatments. In this system, all become routine and rational via reinforcement-learning but the scandal repeats as a system failure. Interestingly, when metrics like impact factor and citations were removed from national-level prize evaluation systems, this encouraged local journals to develop. This partly balances the former SCI-dominant system. Moreover, high-quality Chinese or bilingual journals need to be developed. When more well-educated Chinese can read high-quality scientific articles, this may help identify, give multi-level control of decisions and feedback loops on, and modulate the wrongdoings functioning as a “capacitator” and thus prevent a system failure, i.e. scandal [6]. Communication mutualism should evolve from outdated one.

However, we should avoid to the opposite extreme, the “revolution” backward to the outdated system based on sole connections and/or major subjective evaluation, but basically abandoning SCI-system. Therefore, we recommend one SCI-based evaluation systems, defined as “OAI 3746”, namely “Open Access to information” and referring to “golden-section systems”: the 1st “golden-section” can be 3:7 since the rest represents as 30% weight and SCI articles weighs as 70% [This somehow likes Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-leading democracy politics system: The CCP voice as the major; other parties’ voice (e.g. their proposals or feedback whatever) scores as around 30% weight as the minor. As the major, CCP voice scores as more than 70% weight]. Besides, the 2nd “golden-section” can be 4:6 since the term of each members for evaluating the research achievement is three years. 40% members should be new replacements elected by the voting; 60% remains in the board for another term. Each member may continuously work once, the maximum for two terms.

Conclusion

We can prevent SCI scandals through improving the research track by eliminating the climate of irrational outsourcing, bullying, inequality and unfairness in research hospitals, allowing researchers time to retract dubious articles, then perfecting a hallmark system that is tough on wrongdoing, one strategy borrowed from Chinese Communist Party Discipline Inspection’s anti-corruption.

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