Medical school dean’s scientific production of the main universities by continent

Produção científica dos reitores de medicina das principais universidades por continente

Christian Renzo Aquino-Canchari1
orcid.org/0000-0002-7718-5508
christian.aquino.canchari@gmail.com

Crissia Janedyth Arancel Rodriguez2
orcid.org/0000-0001-7397-4836
jeinrod@gmail.com

Salvador F. Tejada3
orcid.org/0000-0001-5113-7785
salvadorftejada@gmail.com

Abstract
Introduction: promoting scientific research is one of the main functions of universities. Medical schools should not be an exception; deans should also have appropriate research experience that allows them to have a different perspective on the importance of research in undergraduate medicine.

Aim: to determine the medical school dean’s scientific production of the main universities by continent.

Methods: an observational, analytical, and transversal study. We identify the medical school dean’s scientific production of the 20 universities with the best position from South America, Central America, North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, according to the Ranking Webometrics 2022, in the Scopus database.

Results: 140 directors or deans of medicine were evaluated, of which 136 (97.1%) had published an article at least once in their life, 128 (91.4%) in the last five years, 103 (73.6%) in the previous year, and 93 (66.4%) in the current year. The total number of published articles was 24.5 (Me=98), receiving a total of 1,251,766 citations (range 0 to 101,868), an H-index 24 (range 0 to 140), and in collaboration with 154,711 coauthors.

Conclusions: the medical school dean’s scientific production from the main universities by continent was high, with notable differences between those who came from universities in Asia, North America, and Europe compared to Oceania, Africa, South America, and Central America.

Keywords: research, dean, schools medical, journal articles, citation databases.

Resumo
Introdução: promover a pesquisa científica é uma das principais funções das universidades. As escolas médicas não devem ser uma exceção. Os reitores também devem ter uma experiência de pesquisa adequada que lhes permita ter uma perspectiva diferente sobre a importância da pesquisa na graduação em medicina.

Objetivo: determinar a produção científica dos reitores de medicina das principais universidades por continente.

Métodos: estudo observacional, analítico e transversal. Identificamos a produção científica dos pré-reitores de medicina das 20 universidades com melhor posição da América do Sul, América Central, América do Norte, Europa, Ásia, África e Oceania, segundo o Ranking Webometrics 2022, na base Scopus.

Resultados: foram avaliados 140 diretores ou reitores de medicina, dos quais 136 (97.1%) publicaram artigo pelo menos uma vez na vida, 128 (91.4%) nos últimos cinco anos, 103 (73.6%) no ano anterior, e 93 (66.4%) no ano corrente. O número total de artigos publicados foi de 24.5 (Me=98), recebendo um total de 1,251,766 citações (intervalo de 0 a 101,868), índice H = 24 (intervalo de 0 a 140) e em colaboração com 154,711 coautores.

1 Universidad Peruana los Andes (UPLA), Facultad de Medicina Humana, Huancayo, Junín, Perú.
2 Universidad Continental (UCCI), Facultad de Medicina Humana, Huancayo, Junín, Perú.
3 Universidad Católica de Santa María (UCSM), Facultad de Medicina Humana, Arequipa, Arequipa, Perú.
Conclusões: a produção científica dos reitores de medicina das principais universidades por continente foi alta, com diferenças notáveis entre aqueles que vieram de universidades da Ásia, América do Norte e Europa em comparação com Oceania, África, América do Sul e América Central.

Palavras-chave: pesquisar, reitor, escolas médicas, artigos de jornal, bancos de dados de citações

Introduction

Research in medicine is of great importance for the development of society (1). All treatments, interventions, drugs, forms of care, and aftercare in the medical field or health care system came from discoveries (2). Currently, medical care must be based on assertive, well-founded decisions that are obtained methodically and systematically (3).

Universities are one of the research development since it contributes directly and indirectly to their main mission, on, which is teaching (4). In recent years, involving medical students in scientific research has gained interest due to its multiple benefits (5). Additionally, it has been reflected in the need for teachers who teach research to have adequate academic training, as well as research that can be reflected in information databases (6).

However, on many occasions, the question can be raised as to whether those who are in charge of the institutions that train future researchers in medicine, in particular the deans, should or should not also have appropriate research training, reflected in their scientific production since at the time of reaching these administrative positions it allows them to have a different perspective on the importance of research in undergraduate medicine (7).

Currently, university rankings are a phenomenon that measures the reputation of universities and higher education institutions, and directly influences their image and prestige in the eyes of thousands of potential students around the world (8). Finally, there is still no similar article with this type of analysis in the scientific literature. The principal objective was to determine the medical school dean's scientific production of the main universities by continent.

Methods

Study design

Observational study, analytical and transversal.

Process

A systematic search was carried out in three stages: the first consisted of looking for the twenty best-positioned universities by continent with a school or faculty of Human Medicine. There is a big gap in the education and research fields between North America and the rest of the countries; therefore, we divided The American continent into three regions (North America, Central America, and South America) to know the reality of research in Latin America. We select the universities based on the second edition (July 2022) of the Ranking of Webometrics of World Universities (https://www.webometrics.info) (9), which includes 140 university faculties from 34 countries.

The second stage consisted of accessing the official web pages of the universities to register the complete data of the deans of faculties and directors of Human Medicine schools.

Finally, the third stage consisted of searching for the scientific publications indexed in the Scopus database of directors or deans, using a combination of names and surnames; the cases of homonymy were treated individually and used in previous studies (10, 11). The information was collected in the period between September 30 and December 10, 2022, and was carried out by each researcher independently and in the event of disagreement, it was resolved by consensus.

The following data were extracted: the number of articles published in different periods concerning the time of the search (for the year 2022 it was considered until September when the data was collected) the publication of original articles, the number of citations of the publications, the number of co-authors, principal investigators, and the H-index (12). In those cases where articles were not registered in association with the country and current institution of affiliation, it was checked if there was previous scientific production linked to
other places (for example, during their undergraduate and/or postgraduate training).

**Ethical considerations**

The present study complies with the ethical standards for biomedical research of the Declaration of Helsinki of the World Medical Association since it does not involve human subjects. Therefore, it is exempt from approval by an ethics committee, since the nature of the study is non-interventional.

**Analysis of data**

For data collection, a registration form was prepared including the variables studied. The data was analyzed in the Microsoft Excel 2019® program, and subsequently, the statistical quantification was carried out using the STATA v 14.0 statistical package, for the descriptive analysis percentages and frequency measures and average scores of the variables, significant, measures of central tendency and dispersion.

**Results**

We evaluated 140 directors or deans of medicine; the majority had published at least one article in their lives (97.1%), in the last five years (91.4%), in the previous year (73.6%), and in 2022 (66.4%). All the deans or directors published 24,452 articles, receiving 1,251,766 citations; however, six directors/deans did not receive any citation for their publications (Table 1).

**TABLE 1 – Characteristics of the scientific production of deans of faculties and directors of the main medical schools in scientific journals indexed in Scopus.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Me</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any article published in their life</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any articles published in the last 5 years</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any article published in the previous year</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any article published this year (2022)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>66.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of articles published</td>
<td>24,452</td>
<td></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0 - 1,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of citations</td>
<td>1,251,766</td>
<td></td>
<td>2290</td>
<td>0 - 101,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-Index</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 - 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of co-authors</td>
<td>154,711</td>
<td></td>
<td>421</td>
<td>0 - 15,863</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asian medical school deans or directors published the most articles (n=7,420), followed by North American (n=4,962) and European (n=4,617) regions. We also observed this behavior in original-type articles. Regarding the number of citations received, the North American region received the most citations (n = 351,558), followed by Asia (n = 346,563) and Europe (n = 333,752). The deans from South and Central America had a lower number of publications and citations compared to their counterparts (Figure 1).
Figure 1. Characteristics of the scientific production of deans or directors of medical schools of the main universities by region in scientific journals indexed in Scopus. Number of publications and citations by region (in the case of America this was divided into North America, Central America and South America).

In respect of the indicators of the Webometrics ranking, greater visibility, transparency, and excellence (most cited documents) are observed in universities from North America, followed by Europe and Asia. In addition, it is observed that the median H-index of the deans of medicine is higher in those who come from North America (H-index, Me=62.5), followed by Asia (H-index, Me=49), Europe (H-index, Me=41.5), Oceania (H-index, Me=30.0) (Table 2).
TABLE 2 – Indicators of the web ranking of universities, H-index, and the number of citations of deans or directors, by region. The data corresponds to the scientific production of the 20 deans or directors of the medical schools or faculties of the 20 best-positioned universities according to the Webometrics ranking by region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>University position in the Webometrics World Ranking</th>
<th>Scientific production of the deans or directors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Position Impact (Visibility)</td>
<td>Position Opening (Transparency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>1,449</td>
<td>1,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>4,663</td>
<td>7,420</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>4,724</td>
<td>7,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>575.5</td>
<td>534.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>7,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>7,619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>228.50</td>
<td>168.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>139.5</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>1,955</td>
<td>820.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>5,057</td>
<td>1,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>5,340</td>
<td>1,643</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A moderate negative correlation was found between the position of the university in the Webometrics world ranking with the total number of articles published by its deans ($R^2 = 0.18; p=0.00$), with the total number of citations received ($R^2 = 0.08; p=0.00$), and with the H-index of the director or dean ($R^2 = 0.23; p=0.00$) (Figure 2).
Concerning the number of articles published since 2018, since 2021, and 2022 there is a predominance in the scientific production of deans of faculties or directors of medicine from the Asian continent with 1,639 articles, 539 articles, and 233 articles, respectively (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Analysis of the linear relationship between the University's position in the Webometrics World Ranking with the number of articles published by the dean/director (a), number of citations received by the dean/director (b), and H-index of the dean/director (c), respectively.

Figure 3. Scientific production of deans or directors of faculties or directors of medical schools by continent. Number of articles published in different time intervals.
Discussion

At present, the role of research in the growth of universities is undeniable, since promoting it leads to improving the quality of teachers, generating innovations, and increasing the prestige of the institution and its economic status (13). However, some universities do not internalize this concept, being more evident in developing countries.

Our study found that 97.1% of the deans of the main universities by continent had published an article in their life, this percentage is much higher than studies carried out at a local level such as Argentina (38.7%) (14), Peru (24.0%) (15), Colombia (27.3%) (16).

The governance of universities has changed profoundly in recent years. The dean or director is thus transformed into the main actor for these organizations, he must ensure that continuous quality improvement highlights the faculty programs offered to students and that the educational results for students are of the highest level. The dean must promote and support quality teaching and research (17).

Regarding scientific production, our study showed that the deans from the main universities in Asia presented 49.5% (n=2,458) more articles than their peers from the USA and 60.7% (n=2,803) compared to Europe, this could be because in the last decade the number of researchers in Asia has grown considerably in recent years (18). Similarly, according to the report, published by Japan’s National Institute for Science and Technology Policy (NISTP) in collaboration with Clarivate, the People’s Republic of China now publishes the most scientific research articles per year, followed by the US. In the USA and Germany, in addition, the number of citations of the investigations carried out by the People’s Republic of China represented 27.2% of the most cited articles in the world; this figure exceeded that of the United States, which added 24.9% and the United Kingdom ranked third with 5.5% (19).

Likewise, it should be noted that the scientific production of the deans from Africa, South America, and Central America was considerably low compared to their peers from Europe, Asia, and North America, this is possible because Latin America and the African continent are among the regions with the fewest number of high-quality research universities in the world. No Latin American or African university is in the top 100 in world rankings, and relatively few academics and scientists from the region are among those with the most academic citations (20).

Our findings showed that a better position of the university in the world ranking was associated with a greater scientific production (p=0.00) and a greater number of citations (p=0.00) of its deans of medicine, in agreement with what was reported by Goodall (21), who found a significant positive correlation between lifetime citations of a university chancellor/president and the position of that university in the world ranking, these findings show that the best universities are led by the best researchers.

In the specific field of medicine, there is no doubt that research represents a fundamental pillar of medical activity, this allows us to infer that the best researchers may have greater knowledge about the academic world and better performance as leaders. In addition, the research history of an authority such as the dean can also have a symbolic value, since it sends a signal about the values of the institution (22). Lastly, being a reputable researcher can raise a leader’s status within the academic community and improve their negotiating skills. However, another possible interpretation is that universities select the best researchers for reasons of prestige and to help collect research grants. Another is that the research capacity is highly recognized by its leaders (23).

Another aspect to highlight is that the publications made this year by the deans of medicine from Asia and Europe accounted for 54.3% of the publications made, showing that the deans from these regions have constant research activity.

Limitations

Our study has the following limitations: firstly, we didn’t consider other types of contributions
that the deans could have made, such as the publication of books, and advisory services for undergraduate theses or specialties. Secondly, we did not consider other prestigious databases and other university rankings. Finally, only the 20 universities with the best ranking by continent were included, not including other impactful university metrics.

Conclusions
In conclusion, the scientific production of the deans of the faculties of medicine from the main universities by continent was high, however, it was found that the deans from universities in Asia, North America, and Europe presented a scientific production notably higher than their peers from Oceania, Africa, South America, and Central America.

Notes

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The authors declare no competing interests relevant to the content of this study.

Authors’ contributions
All the authors declare to have made substantial contributions to the conception, or design, or acquisition, or analysis, or interpretation of data; and drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and to approve the version to be published.

Availability of data and responsibility for the results
All the authors declare to have had full access to the available data and they assume full responsibility for the integrity of these results.

References


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**Christian Renzo Aquino-Canchari**

Master’s in Stomatology from the Cayetano Heredia University (UPCH), in Lima, Peru. Specialist in Public Health Stomatology from the Cayetano Heredia University, in Lima, Peru. Specialist in Applied Statistics from the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI-Peru). Medical Surgeon from the Peruvian University of the Andes (UPLA), in Huancayo, Peru. Dentist from the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega University (UIGV), in Lima, Peru.

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**Crissia Janedhy Arancel Rodríguez**

Student at the School of Human Medicine at Continental University (UCCI), in Huancayo, Junin, Peru.

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**Salvador F. Tejada**

Student at the College of Human Medicine at the Catholic University of Santa Maria (UCSM), Investigation and Medical Studies Center (CIEM), in Arequipa, Arequipa, Peru.

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**Mailing address**

Christian Renzo Aquino-Canchari

CC.HH. Juan Parra del Riego II Etapa, Block 2, dpto. 101
El Tambo, Huancayo, Perú

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