

Review of: "Post-Publication Racism: A Nail in the Coffin of Academic Medical Publishing"

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This manuscript addresses a crucial issue in the context of racism and discrimination in academia. While structural racism in academia and academic medicine has started to gain more attention (i.e., Gray et al. 2020), post-publication racism, to the best of my knowledge, is a rather new focus. Hence, Prof. Mohamed Kandil explores a new perspective on issues of racism in academia. He highlights the destructive nature to science and society as well as to Researchers/Authors individually in a convincing way and while he raises important issues, more evidence is needed to support and back up some of these claims (i.e., “when a reviewer/researcher starts to throw accusations of scientific misconduct about data integrity”) or that these accusations are directed to “third world countries”. The latter term is outdated and can further exacerbate generalisation and stereotypes that the author is trying to combat. Hence this term should be replaced with “developing countries”. The terms discrimination and racism are used interchangeably, but these should be defined clearly and the lines between the two should be made explicit. Prof. Kandil uses some speculative language (“The persistence of repeating the same concerns to journals and the researchers’ institutions reflects the racist attitude of the complainant which cannot be for the sake of science or research. It is to hinder the academic achievements of the researcher(s) and ruin their reputation and the academic progression of the institution” or “if it doesn’t catch it will distort”). Empirical evidence is needed to support these claims otherwise they seem assumptious and speculative. Furthermore, the call for individuals “suggesting ideologies” is not convincing enough and should be framed on the basis of economic or political theory. I appreciate that the author aims to shed light on the ideology developing countries being “the other” and associated with less academic integrity, but his statement seems too vague to achieve this aim. More clarity and detail on which countries specifically suffer from post-publication racism would avoid the generalisation of developing countries. The author could have used more prominent work from scholars of post colonialism as these can be linked to the current issue the author raises. For instance Edward Said’s (1987) work “Orientalism” as a discursive formation that demonizes the ‘Other’, which is founded in post-colonialism could have been used to support statements and claims.

I appreciate the call to authors to speak up and voice themselves and share individual stories and experiences. This is extremely important and gives ground to act and spread awareness; fight racism and discrimination in academia and give those space and encouragement to share their stories. This was affected authors (as well as those fighting racism in academia) can start to collaboratively make sense of a difficult issue and possibly start changing the discourse around the academic integrity of researchers from developing countries to ultimately change and challenge post-publication racism in both East and West.

The topic is worth scholarly attention and should be developed further after making improvements particularly with regards to overall framing and empirical and scientific evidence generally. It has potential to contribute to research on racism in medical research as well as academia more broadly.