

Letter to the editor

The Knowledge without Border

Dear Editor,

We read with interest the Correspondence entitled “Strengthening US-Iranian relations through public health”, published in the September 2015 issue of the *Lancet Glob Health Journal* (Volume 3, pages: e525–e526).¹ The authors prepared the paper, considering the visit of the chancellors of two Iranian Universities of Medical Sciences to the University at Albany in the United States.

Knowledge acquisition is strongly recommended in the Islamic-Iranian culture. This issue has been emphasized in the holy Quran and the prophet of Islam in a hadith (which is also imprinted on Iranian banknotes): “If science be in the Pleiades, i.e., seven sisters star, individuals from Persia will reach it”. Knowledge acquisition is considered a social value in Iran. For example, the number of university students in Iran (in a population of about 70 million people) has increased from 340,000 to 4,400,000 over a 20-year period (1991–2011), which indicates a 13-fold growth.² Also, according to the Web of Science database (Thomson Reuters), Iran had the highest rate of scientific growth in publishing academic papers worldwide in the 2000s³ and this happened subsequent to the Iran-Iraq war and the relative stagnation resulting from that period.

The authors of this letter believe that there is no geographical or political border for knowledge and moving into frontiers of knowledge and excellence in health care is a cross borders act. Undoubtedly, scientific interaction between universities and researchers in countries is affected by the public formal diplomacy. However, the ability to abstract issues from each other was one of the key points in negotiations between Iran and the 5 + 1, which led to a “good nuclear deal” for the entire world. In fact, in critical situations with the flames of war being kindled in various parts of the world, it is of great value that the diplomatic authorities of these countries could tactically avoid extending conflicts and not considering all disagreements, but have focused on the main is-

sue. The presence of the chancellors of two Iranian Universities of Medical Sciences in the Universities of the United States is based on a clear purpose and at a global level, i.e., the development of health related sciences, using all capabilities. The decisive role of Iran cannot be ignored in health promotion in the Middle East and neighboring countries facing serious healthcare problems due to several interventions. This country is located in a region with several political, social and health problems and given its high potential of human resources in medical sciences, it can be more influential than ever in various dimensions of healthcare; Medical Sciences Universities with the unique experience in merging education and health services can be the focus of this type of activities. Based on this explanation, it is clear that the purpose of universities is knowledge exchanges and to find important and useful areas of interest for cooperation in the fields of education, research and service delivery. However, this has been previously achieved to a large extent by individual faculty members in the form of sabbaticals. Universities must attempt to realize their main scientific and social roles as university despite ups and downs in political relationships and should avoid undue politicization. This route is undoubtedly beneficial for all humanity, which should be pursued seriously.

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3. 30 Years in Science-Secular Movements in Knowledge Creation. Available from: URL: <http://rosmu.ru/activity/attach/opinions/111/30years-paper.pdf> (Last accessed on October 24, 2015)