Concerning an interesting paper by Didari and Abdollahi entitled, “Ethical Priority Setting for Successful Publishing by Iranian Scientists”. The authors seemed to paint a bleak picture of the recent Iranian research atmosphere. There are some additional points to be considered before deriving such a conclusion.

- In the opinion of Didari and Abdollahi, “…high-rank medical practitioners and administrators are also likely to commit fraud in research. Their numerous clinical and executive duties leave little or no time and energy for precise research activities, which are mandatory for academic promotion”, but this was unfortunately written without any support by evidence or reliable references. To date, none of the above mentioned individuals have any published papers that are retracted due to unethical behaviors (See retraction watch database using author search (http://retractionwatchdatabase.org/RetractionSearch.aspx?&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1).

- Didari and Abdollahi pointed out that imposed sanctions on Iran partly gave rise to the emergence of frauds and problems in scientific publishing. Since around 1978, it has been more than 40 years that Iranian scientists were being challenged from non-stop sanctions, and we agree that despite the sanctions, based on our own data, the number of publications are increasing year after year (Figure 1) and so are the number of retracted publications (Figure 2). How do we explain this observation? We searched the retraction watch database, and we found there were few questionable types of fraud publications there. Based on our analysis, the two main reasons for retractions of Iranian papers were due to fake reviews and duplication/falsification (Figures 3).

So, why despite the sanction, there are more submitted papers? And how sanctions led to increased duplication/falsification by Iranian researchers? These are not easily answered questions. Didari and Abdollahi opined that sanctions stopped imports of high-tech research equipment into the country and this hampers better research and leaves novel publications to chance. In reality, none of the retracted papers by Iranians were published in high-rank journals. The best impact factor (IF) of journals that retracted Iranian papers was not more than three. Faked-review is a relatively newly identified publishing phenomenon that requires urgent input by authorities to better manage it. It is unfortunate that many researchers and
students may be unaware of such unconscious plagiaristic acts and other scientific misconducts. There should be an international committee on ethics and research integrity as a global watch dog to address this emerging issue. In addition, there should be urgent reviews in institutional policies in the screening of new faculty members and academic promotion. To conclude, we are of the opinion that addressing ethics should be the first step in ensuring transparency in scientific publishing, especially among research and publishing stakeholders in Iran.

Authors’ Contribution
ATBA and YYL equally contributed to writing and finalizing the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Disclosures
The authors have no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Statement
Not applicable.

References