



EDITORIAL

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It is no mystery that the volume of research in Latin America is far from that of Europe, North America and even Asia (mainly China and India). This situation is not very different in the dental field, but we find some exceptions that are worth mentioning and analyzing.

A recent report¹, which analyzed the productivity of global research published in dental journals indexed in Web of Science (formerly ISI) during the years 2007-2011, shows some relevant data for the Latin American region. Brazil occupies the second place worldwide, still very far from the United States (first place), but quite ahead of Japan, England and Germany, countries that occupy the next places in the ranking. However, the most important fact is that Brazil has the highest annual growth rate of these top-five countries, so it is expected that the distance with the United States will be even smaller in the short and medium term.

However, there are other relevant aspects to be analyzed in the Brazilian case. If we consider the five most productive institutions worldwide, three of them are Brazilian (USP, UNESP and UNICAMP) and two, English. This could be seen as a strong point, as these institutions have an undeniable regional and global presence. However, it means that there is a strong geographical concentration of productivity leading to undesirable situations such as oligopolies and the *Matthew effect*. To examine the Brazilian case more closely, we must analyze what proportion of total research in this country is published in dental journals. Results show that this figure reached 3.10% during the period studied, second only to Jordan with 3.54% of the 44 countries analyzed in the study. By way of comparison, research published in dental journals accounted for only 0.58% of total ISI publications in the United States. One last interesting point about Brazil is the number of Brazilian journals indexed in Web of Science and/or Scopus. There

Dental research in Latin America, a call for regional cooperation and decentralization.

are currently 2 journals in the first database and 7 in the second. There is only one Latin American non-Brazilian dental journal in this last database (*Revista Cubana de Estomatología*).

Taking into account all these facts, it is obvious that Brazil is the biggest power of dental research in the region, but it is hard not to wonder if there is much more room for concentrated growth in one region of this vast country and Latin America as a whole. If the answer is yes, will it be beneficial for dental research in Latin America and particularly in Brazil? If it is no, then what steps should we take in order to move forward and reach the level of success achieved by Brazil?

Notwithstanding, there is interesting data coming from other Latin American countries; it is the case of Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Colombia. The first point of interest is that despite being included among the 44 most productive countries, the four combined account for only 10% of Brazilian productivity. However, the second point of interest is that with the exception of Colombia, the rest of them have annual growth rates above those of Brazil, as well as better indicators in relation to the rate of citations and international cooperation. Still, Brazil has a better relationship between productivity and per capita income and population, *i.e.*, they publish more papers per million population and income levels of its population. The latter is expected considering the great importance of dental research in Brazil.

It seems then that when it comes to dental research in Latin America, Brazil is guaranteed to feature, unfortunately not only for productivity but also because of concentration. Another interesting fact of this situation is that 80% of papers published in Brazilian dental journals indexed in Scopus come from Brazil itself and about half of them come from the three aforementioned universities (USP, UNESP and UNICAMP).



Concentration is not a problem *per se*, in fact, in this case it has happened as a result of the efforts done by the government and the abovementioned institutions. Today they enjoy the results of many years of hard work. However, just a small step ahead of concentration we find oligopoly and monopoly, with all the negative effects already known to the markets.

Effort should be focused on the decentralization process of the whole Latin American region, in fact, this is already happening. The most important Brazilian universities have established academic cooperation with

their Latin American peers, a significant proportion of researchers and clinicians in this region are trained in Brazilian institutions.

But what data show is that there are grounds for accelerating Latin American cooperation in dental sciences, a task that depends not only on Brazil, but also on the rest of the region.

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