NEW CRITERIA FOR FACULTY APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTION IN SURGICAL SPECIALTIES AT “CAROL DAVILA” UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE AND PHARMACY – A STEP FORWARD BUT STILL TO IMPROVE

An academic surgeon should have three main goals for excellence: clinical (patient) care (including operative activity), scientific research and teaching (education). All these aspects should be taken into consideration for faculty appointments and promotion.

Criteria and procedures available to the appointment and promotion of faculty in the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy have been recently released. Some important modifications have been made compared with old criteria, particularly for a position of associate professor and full professor.

A major step forward was made to include in the minimal standard only the real and valuable scientific work, published in journals with impact factor and real peer review process. Furthermore, it is quantified the real impact of the potential candidate scientific work on the scientific community, expressed by the number of citations for his/her work. Based on the number of citations for each published paper a Hirsch index is calculated for each candidate. One might not agree with the value of Hirsch index and how to assess it (is it better with ISI Web of Knowledge Core Collection or Google Scholar or Elsevier-Scopus?), but it is a reasonable tool to quantify the impact of the scientific work to the community. The minimal value of the Hirsch index for promotions remains an open discussion.

Nevertheless, to me, it is not acceptable for a candidate to have hundreds of so-called scientific papers usually published in the same journals (sometimes many papers in the same issue of a journal!) but with very low numbers of citations. The number of citations by other authors should be at least equal to the number of published papers to take into consideration a candidate for faculty promotion.

Some improvements are however needed regarding the scoring of scientific papers. Thus, at the moment differences of quantification in points between papers published in high-quality journals (with impact factor) is not so far from the points of papers published in low-quality journals (without impact factor). Furthermore, a big differentiation in points should be made between papers where the candidate is main author or just a co-author among many others.

Another important step forward for surgical specialties was made with the new criteria by putting a minimal number of operative procedures for high faculty positions. To me, you cannot be a good teacher in the field of surgery if you do not have a significant operative activity on your own. However, some urgent improvements are also needed in this field because these surgical procedures are not differentiated for their complexity (to date removal of a sebaceous cyst is counted like a liver transplant!). Furthermore, each surgical procedure should be quantified in points according to its complexity and included in the final assessment of the candidate.

In conclusion, the new criteria for faculty promotion in surgical specialties in our University represent an important step forward but improvements are urgently needed.

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