

Progress and Bias

The number of publications in the periodontal field has considerably increased during the last decades, and many new ideas and concepts have been presented and critically evaluated. The volume of contributions in periodontal research also documents the amount of money that is spent for research purposes. Considering these aspects one may critically ask: "What type of progress are we making as regards our knowledge and understanding of the prevention, onset and therapy of human periodontitis?"

Based on the current fiscal policies prevailing at a state level, funding from public sources will remain uncertain to say the least as long as the outcomes of research are measured by financial success. It follows that if the total amount spent on research is limited or declines, there is inevitably less money available per project. Given that the number of publicly funded projects is already restricted the result can only be that some projects will never receive financial support.

This is forcing researchers to investigate alternative sources of finance with the consequence that the impact of commercial and industrial support of periodontal research has increased during the last years. This trend is clearly reflected in the number of clinical papers presented at international meetings as well as in the published content in international peer-reviewed journals. This development carries the implicit risk that editors may favor certain articles, if they have a personal affiliation to, or act as a consultant to a particular company.

This raises the question, whether objective research is still guaranteed and whether opinion leaders in our field can remain unbiased in their evaluation of different therapeutic strategies. These types of clinical research may be interesting for practitioners, but on the other hand they are of only limited value for the progress in our field.

As concerned researchers we must endeavor to acquire funding that can be used for basic as well as independent clinical periodontal research which, in the long term, will lead to real progress also for daily practice, rather than concentrate on funding that is specifically related to industrial interests or particular products.

This editor sincerely hopes that it will be possible to maximize independent financial resources and funds for periodontal research at an institutional level through multinational collaboration. This can only be of great value in the future.



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