

# RESEARCH AND MENTAL HEALTH IN THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

LA INVESTIGACIÓN CIENTÍFICA Y LA SALUD MENTAL EN LA PROFESIÓN MÉDICA

Cristhian Rojas-Miliano<sup>1,a</sup>

## Mr. Editor

Research enriches the professional profile of those who follow a scientific career, but at the same time, it requires willingness, time and, sometimes, a certain amount of resources. Because of this, whoever that choose to investigate should consider the benefits and sacrifices involved in carrying it out. Emotional well-being is a variable to take into account for this decision making.

Approximately 50.6% of Peruvian medical students manifest that they want to dedicate themselves to research in the future<sup>(1)</sup>. However, the percentage of Peruvian doctors who publish scientific articles is lower. For example, in Cusco, only 17.2% of the doctors who work there have published a scientific article<sup>(2)</sup>.

The reason that doctors do not publish despite the interest that they have or have had to investigate may be due to internal factors, such as lack of time or methodological knowledge; and external, such as the lack of financing or support from the authorities. These obstacles can generate a level of stress that prevents the investigation. But in long term, this can generate frustration. This feeling, when it is not properly managed and / or added to other factors, can propitiate the appearance of mental health problems such as depressive symptoms or Burnout syndrome.

In general, scientific activity combined with the academic and / or workload of the medical profession could cause an overload of work that affects the mental health. However, evidence reports that a greater number of study hours is not necessarily associated with any mental health problem (such as Burnout syndrome)<sup>(3)</sup>. So, the scientific activity and investigation could act in the same way.

In addition, it has been observed that research improves the chances of success in the academic field<sup>(4)</sup>. For this reason, the research would reduce the risk of feeling dissatisfaction with professional and / or academic achievements, thus avoiding the negative impact of not achieving the objectives.

On the other hand, a cross-sectional study carried out in resident physicians shows that the presence of depressive symptoms is inversely associated with the possibility of publishing scientific articles<sup>(5)</sup>. However, the temporal directionality with which these variables interact remains undetermined. Although presenting depressive symptoms can reduce participation in activities such as research; It is also feasible that the habit of investigating allows the acquisition of behaviors or aptitudes (such as social skills, resilience, perseverance, etc.) that decrease the risk of suffering depressive symptoms.

In sum, research is a relevant variable to be evaluated as a protective factor for the appearance of some mental health problems in Peruvian doctors and medical students. Interventions aimed at increasing the scientific production of this population, such as some thesis workshops<sup>(6)</sup> or research internships, may serve to investigate this possible relationship. Likewise, it could be studied how these variables interact in people who follow other professional careers.

<sup>1</sup> National University of the Center of Peru (UNCP), Huancayo-Peru.

<sup>a</sup> Medical student.

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**Correspondence:** Cristhian Rojas-Miliano.

**Address:** Av. Mariscal Castilla 4500, El Tambo, Huancayo-Perú.


**Telephone:** 944892342

**E-mail:** alexrojasmiliano@gmail.com

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