

Sri Lankan research output in the global context : Where do we stand?

Nipun Lakshitha De Silva, Department of Clinical Medicine, University of Colombo
Pradeepa Wijetunga, Library, University of Peradeniya
Senaka Rajapakse, Department of Clinical Medicine, University of Colombo

Introduction and objectives:

There is little data on the contribution to global research by Sri Lankan researchers. We studied the research performance by Sri Lankan researchers with the objectives of describing publication patterns and principal subject areas, identifying key research institutions and international collaborations, assessing the evolution of research patterns and the level of citations.

Methods:

We searched several key databases for publications with Sri Lankan authors from 2003 to 2012. Retrieved data were categorised as 'peer-reviewed journal papers' and 'conference presentations', and analysed according to document type, subject area, institution, journal, international collaborations, and citation details.

Results:

The total number of publications was as follows: 4777 from Web of Science (WoS), 6546 from Scopus, 2212 from EMBASE, 1684 from Medline 2789 from CABdirect and 462 from IEEEExplore. Majority were articles. From 2003 to 2013, the number of peer reviewed journal papers has gradually increased, while the number of conference abstracts has declined. The Universities of Peradeniya (WoS-26.8%, Scopus-23.53%), Colombo (WoS-18.3%, Scopus-19.95%) and Kelaniya (WoS-8.5%, Scopus-8.53%) had the highest output. In WoS the above three institutions had h-indices of 37, 33 and 24 respectively while values for Scopus were 40, 37 and 25. The highest number of publications was in the field of medicine. The highest numbers of international collaborations were with USA in WoS (13.7%) and UK in Scopus (13.94%). Contributions to global output in WoS were 0.036% and in Scopus 0.035%.

Conclusion:

Publications by Sri Lankan authors in peer-reviewed journals are increasing, but the contribution to global research remains low. Policy makers should support academic institutions to enhance the quality, relevance and output of research by Sri Lankan researchers, and researchers should focus on obtaining high quality publications.