

EDITORIAL

Reaffirming the Scientific Purpose of Medical Journals: Concerns over The Lancet's Coverage of Indian Medical Education

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We express grave concern over the Editorial "Corruption scandal engulfs Indian medical education" published in The Lancet on July 19, 2025 (1). We hold The Lancet's prestigious global reputation and historical contributions to medical science in high regard. Still, we critically question its editorial judgment and adherence to the journal's core scientific goals in publishing this article.

Our criticisms arise from these five essential and interconnected issues:

Essential Discrepancy with Scientific Purpose: The Lancet's stated goal, according to our understanding and the general global view, is the "promotion and dissemination of advancements in Medical Sciences." However, this article focuses on unsubstantiated criminal accusations against specific individuals (1), rather than presenting scientific research, clinical data, or medical progress. Investigative journalism, particularly on alleged corruption and legal issues, falls clearly within the domain of news organizations, not a leading scientific journal. Publishing such material blurs important disciplinary boundaries, threatens The Lancet's unique scientific credibility, and significantly diverges from the strict standards of evidence-based reporting expected from a scientific journal.

Assumptive and Very Biased Headline: The headline "Corruption scandal engulfs Indian medical education" (1) is not only eye-catching but also biased and misleading. It suggests a complete

system failure ("engulfs") based solely on allegations during an initial inquiry, before any legal ruling is reached. Science requires careful analysis, verifiable facts, and cautious conclusions. This headline assumes guilt before due process, directly opposing the core principle of "innocent until proven guilty."

Highlights sensationalism over scientific objectivity and facts. The Lancet, as a leading scientific publication, must publish impartial, fact-based headlines that accurately reflect research findings and progress. It should not appear to pass judgment through word choice, especially on active legal matters. (2)

Significant Distortion of Systemic Health and Responsibility: The paper, unfortunately, overlooks a crucial aspect of an effective system: its inherent capacity for self-correction and accountability. The involvement of senior officials from the National Medical Commission (NMC) and related entities in investigations by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and ongoing legal proceedings demonstrates the proper functioning of accountability mechanisms. (2,3) Your article clearly shows that the NMC has taken public administrative actions, including blacklisting assessors and suspending seat renewals, pending legal resolution. Prosecuting individuals in positions of authority for alleged misconduct indicates that the system is working as intended, rather than being "overwhelmed" or in decline. An effective

and resilient system recognizes, investigates, and corrects misconduct; it does not aim for the complete elimination of wrongdoers. Portraying necessary legal measures and oversight bodies' operations as evidence of systemic failure is a serious misrepresentation and weakens public confidence in the very mechanisms meant to uphold integrity. (4,5)

Lack of Scientific Contribution: This study does not present any new scientific data, empirical assessments of educational outcomes, or evidence-based solutions relevant to medical science. The focus on unverified accusations against specific individuals, while possibly significant for mainstream media (6), adds little real benefit to scientific discussion. The legal process is intended to review these issues, and its findings, once completed, will be made public. Publishing detailed claims as facts in a scientific journal risks interfering with legal proceedings and significantly undermining The Lancet's primary goal of advancing medical knowledge and practice.

CONCLUSION

We strongly urge The Lancet to thoroughly reassess its editing standards for such publications and reaffirm its steadfast commitment to scientific progress. While accountability is crucial in any field, publishing unverified criminal allegations under a biased headline—before any judicial ruling—is fundamentally inconsistent with a publication dedicated to rigorous research, clinical evidence, and medical innovation. It threatens to undermine the integrity of legal processes and greatly distracts from the vital scientific discourse that The Lancet aims to promote.

A truly scientific and responsible approach would recognize that investigating and punishing individuals, including those in the highest levels of administration, exemplifies a responsive and forward-thinking system rather than indicating its decline. The Lancet's primary responsibility, as we see it, is to clarify scientific and health

advancements, not to sensationalize current legal issues better suited for coverage by mainstream news outlets.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

All authors have contributed equally.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The authors haven't used any generative AI/AI assisted technologies in the writing process.

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