



Research Integrity Challenges in Perú

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Disclaimers

These are just my opinions and not necessarily those of my employer
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I often work in research integrity issues with my dear sister, Roxana L.



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- Payment per publication, postgraduate degrees and other distortions
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- Publishing as an outcome/goal
- Losing the scientific as a record of valuable scientific knowledge



The Peruvian biomedical research landscape

- Perú, an important hub of international collaboration
- High number of research and training grants, NIH & other US/European sponsors
- Concentrated on internationally-recognized centers/leaders: UPCH, Impacta/Inmensa, NAMRU-6, IIN, San Marcos University, Socios en Salud, PRISMA
- Focused on infectious diseases, but track record on high altitude physiology and fast-growing non-communicable diseases

Huamani et al, 2010

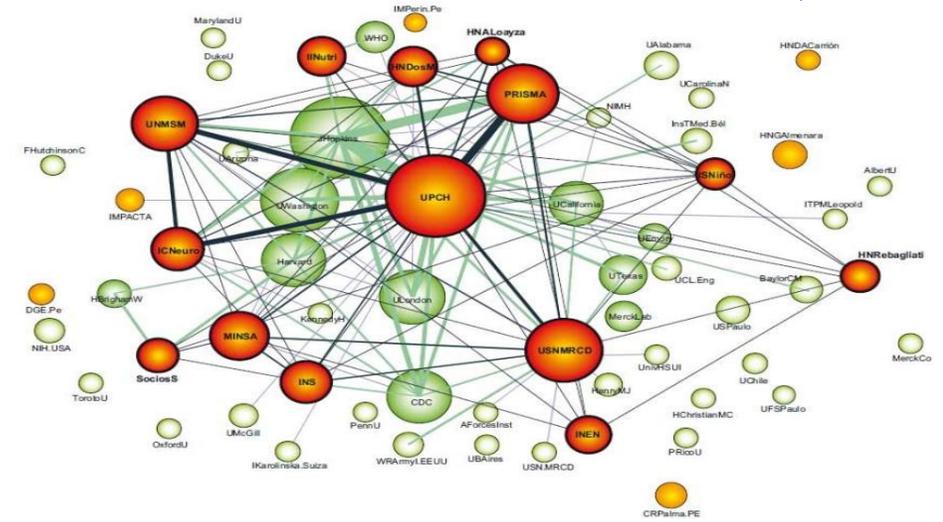
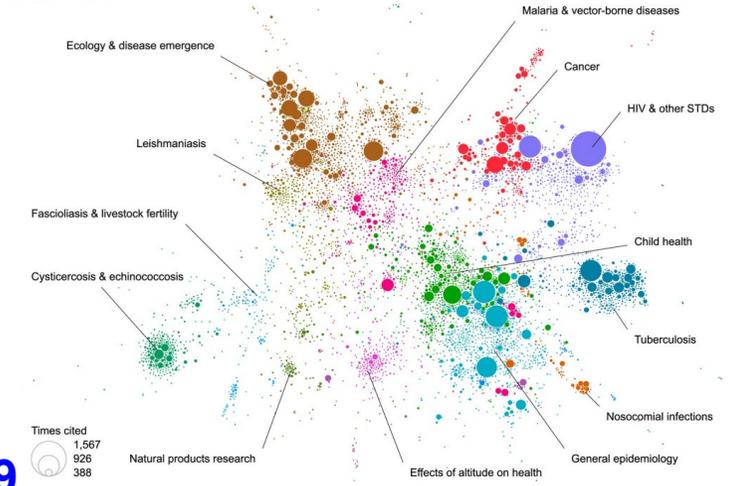


Figura 5. Colaboración institucional en publicaciones con participación peruana en revistas ISI [CLINICAL MEDICINE] 2000-2009. Nota: se muestra las instituciones con más de diez publicaciones, en rojo-naranja las peruanas y en verde las extranjeras. Las líneas muestran el nivel de colaboración entre los nodos. Las líneas grises muestran las relaciones de más de diez publicaciones, en verde las de más de 15, y en azul de más de 20 publicaciones entre instituciones peruanas. El tamaño de los nodos es equivalente al número de publicaciones de la institución.

Belter et al, 2019





Research capacity building

- Epi Master's and PhD created in 2007 & 2016, respectively. Faculty from the whole research community
- Aimed to start the local training of the next generation of PIs, graduated many successful researchers and public health leaders
- Created with funding from FIC/PROCIENCIA grants, support for scholarships also
- Successful research-methods oriented program, replicated US epi curriculum





The 30220 University Law, 2014

- For-profit universities growing since 1991, quality/other concerns
- Landmark legislation, establishes minimal quality conditions for independent university licensing (Sunedu), starting 2015
- Licensing requirements include a plan to conduct research
 - Objectives, research lines, infrastructure/equipment, qualified faculty
- Highly prescriptive, additional requirements
 - Faculty need Master's degrees
 - A PhD is required to teach in PhD programs
 - Codes for research ethics and integrity

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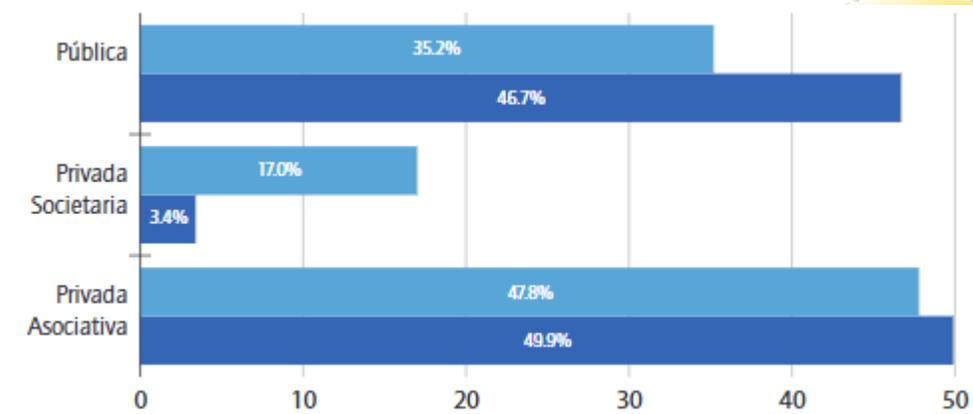
Ha dado la Ley siguiente:

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What changed?

- More publications, particularly from for-profit universities (Gonzalez 2021), conference abstracts
- Some universities started offering publishing incentives:
 - Fully paid article processing charges (APCs)
 - Bonus for published papers, Nieto-Gutierrez 2017
 - Contracts require a publication quotas
 - Minimal/No research support (grants, labs, field/clinical sites, etc), only for outcomes
- Increased demand for faculty with Master's degree that could publish



Gonzalez & Diestra, 2021



The literature/authors expand rapidly

- Opinion-centered letters to the editor were already popular among medical students, many courses on how to write them
- Secondary data analyses of national surveys (DHS/others)
- Case reports and short case series based on chart reviews
- Multi-purpose, multi-centric questionnaire-only online surveys
- Systematic reviews of different kinds, with limited participation of global experts in the topic

Peruvian publications in Scopus, as of today

Large changes highlighted

Publication type	1994	2004	2014	2024	Japan 2024	Ratio
Article	120	405	1,350	7,747	103,125	13.3
Conference paper	3	52	149	2,280	20,625	9.0
Review	8	46	85	614	5,755	9.4
Letter	4	9	71	243	2,372	9.8
Book chapter	1	9	87	365	4,374	12.0



Parameters of research practice change

- Instant reward is needed: research cannot take years to publish
- Obtaining research funding is not a priority, writing grants is not needed skill
- Volume over quality: articles published, citations received, H index, rankings, etc
- Rankings: the indicator becomes the goal



Paper mills in Peru and other issues (2022)

- Payment per authorship, possibly due to financial incentives
- International networks, small journals, many stop publishing
- Major national scandal, focus on a few individual cases
- Limited discussion of the role of publication bonuses/contracts in private, for profit-universities



Authorship distortions, top five Scopus articles, 2020 to date

- No NIH-funded PIs or co-PIs
- All publish ≥ 125
- All affiliated primarily with for profit universities



Impact on the scientific record

- Limited number of retractions in LAC
 - (Herrera-Añazgo 2024)
 - 1/10,000 in Peru, Ramos-Castañeda 2025
- Major issue, permanent damage, possibly similar to Type 2 error (Wakefield MMR vaccine)
- What fraction of the actual literature brings actual new knowledge?



Potential actions

- Go back to the basics: funding, research infrastructure
- De-emphasize rankings and outcome indicators
- Re-focus on primary data generation and publication quality
- Teach how to write grants, better mentoring