

# Fast Food and Fast Research: Life-threatening Phenomena

## Dear Editor

The surge in fast food consumption in recent years is considered a threat to human health. This change in the life habit has raised serious concerns among health policy-makers and medical nutrition researchers. Environmental stress, multitasking, low physical activity, and low academic achievement have been shown to influence the predilection for consuming fast food.<sup>1</sup> We have now faced with one similarly threatening phenomenon among university students and academics, which can be termed “fast research”.

Social pressures, as well as the fear of losing job opportunities, are the two main factors that propel university students to urgently seek a thesis supervisor, so that they can perform their research project in a short time, get published, and then secure a position. The occurrence of the social crisis associated with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused depression and anxiety spikes in many postgraduate students as reported by Chirikov and colleagues.<sup>2</sup> This, in turn, may result in conducting fast research programs by students and academics to enable them to publish their papers in a short time. One best example of fast research and publication is certainly the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. Web of Science and Scopus indexed more than 23,600 articles on the COVID-19 pandemic published in the first half of 2020. This number included a plethora of research articles, reviews, notes, letters, and editorials related to COVID-19, covering every subject from virology to epidemiology.<sup>3</sup> A rush in, or lack of, the peer-review process, publishing COVID-19 papers in non-specialized journals, and detection of duplicate published images are all telltale signs of fast research.<sup>3,4</sup> More than half of the medical research has been reported as useless due to poor framing of the study questions, poor study design, scientific misconduct, and poor reporting of results.<sup>5</sup> Many of these problems are thought to be exacerbated in COVID-19 research.<sup>4,6</sup> Furthermore, it has been reported that most early publications on COVID-19 did not contain new information as compared to the H1N1 swine influenza pandemic that occurred in 2009.<sup>7</sup> This is another facet of the fast research and publication phenomena, which hampers the acquisition of valid applied knowledge, but might serve the researcher’s career interests. These issues and the trying conditions of the COVID-19 era can push the researchers and other people towards a point of no return, akin to the event horizon of a black hole. Fast research may lead university students and academics to underthinking and irresponsibility.

Fast food and fast research are both easy to prepare and relatively inexpensive and are favored by people across age and gender divides. Even though they are sometimes stale, they can save people’s lives in an emergency; however, if resorted to frequently, both would deleteriously influence our life in the end.

**Conflict of Interest:** None declared.

Please cite this article as: Kafi M, Enjoo SA. Fast Food and Fast Research: Life-threatening Phenomena. *Iran J Med Sci.* 2021;46(6):501-502. doi: 10.30476/IJMS.2021.90083.2085.

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Received: 13 February 2021

Revised: 27 April 2021

Accepted: 07 June 2021

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