

Should we be encouraging young clinicians to do PhDs?

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YES,

we should be encouraging young clinicians to do PhDs

**particularly those wishing to pursue a career in academic
medicine**



Should we be encouraging young clinicians to do PhDs?

It depends...

Of course, a PhD is not for every young clinician in South Africa

But, for those with a keen interest in academic medicine, a PhD is highly advisable for a multiplicity of reasons



My journey

An interest in disorders of heart muscle amongst South Africans: clinical profile, outcomes, clinical genetics...



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An appropriate academic home



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The importance of mentors



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My journey (2)

An interest in advanced noninvasive cardiovascular imaging: cardiovascular magnetic resonance



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The hard facts

South Africa produces 28 PhDs per 1 million inhabitants

In 2010, SA produced 1, 423 doctorates whereas the University of Sao Paulo (Brazil) produced 2, 244 PhDs

In 2012, in institutions of higher learning, 34% of academics had a PhD

Higher education sector in SA is highly uneven: 10 universities produce 86% of all research and 89% of all doctoral graduates



The hard facts

SA lacks the dense networks that connect universities, hospitals, state, business and industry

SA produces about 7, 500 doctoral articles per year = 0.4% of the total world science production

Poverty cycle drives the low number of PhD production in the country

NPC's revised goal: >5, 000 PhDs graduated per year by 2030 and over 25% of university enrolments at postgraduate level



Why do a PhD?

Individual:

To achieve something significant

To discover or learn something new

To develop skills and to improve one's self

It fits certain individuals' personalities better

A PhD provides both breadth and depth within an area of focus

Important transferable skills (laboratory techniques, scientific writing, grants, interacting with experts)



Why do a PhD?

System:

Critical mass of expertise, knowledge production and experience to drive production in academia, industry, state and economy

Reduce poverty and inequality



Who might enjoy a PhD?

Passionate about your subject

Drive to answer important questions

Love doing the science yourself

Independence in research

Intellectual freedom

Making a contribution to scientific knowledge

Want to become an expert



Reasons not to do a PhD

Peer pressure

Hating your job

Rebellion

Fulfilling the ambition of others

Misplaced genius complex

To be cool

Insecurity

To get a visa or to stay in a country

Want a high paying job



The reality

Less than 10% of PhDs become academics

People with PhDs are more productive and innovative, regardless of the setting in which they work



What SA needs?

More PhDs

A system of quality to rejuvenate the education and health system in the country, in society and to provide a direction for the future

Greater investment in higher education (only 0.7% of GDP spent on higher education)

A rethink of our budgetary framework vis-à-vis education and health



**“The best way
to predict
the future
is to
create it.”**

Abraham Lincoln



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Conclusion

SA healthcare landscape is complex

A system in desperate need of transformation

A system that needs many different kinds of doctors, including individuals to lead the academic project and to champion the research enterprise

A PhD is a basic prerequisite for a career in academic medicine

PhD offers many benefits, but must be pursued for the right reasons

Systemic constraints on the size of the pipeline from honours to PhDs



Thank you



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