



Modernization and growth in Kazakhstan

Almaz Sharman
Deputy CEO for Medicine, Nazarbayev
University, Astana, Republic of
Kazakhstan

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Editorial

Kazakhstan has experienced tremendous growth and rapid economic expansion in recent years. With oil wealth and a vibrant financial sector and investment climate, the country is in a position to leverage its economic prosperity by first of all fostering economic growth in key industries and fields. As a next step, the government of Kazakhstan wants to diversify the economy and develop high-value added goods and services.

As part of its modernization program, Kazakhstan has singled out institutional reforms in higher education and science as a priority to foster a new generation of world-class researchers, engineers, and social scientists. A crucial element in this process is a new research university.

Nazarbayev University, which was established in Astana only two years ago, aims to become a globally recognized teaching and research institution. Its primary goal is to equip the country's students to compete globally by integrating teaching, research and the industrial application of science.

We recognize that the fruits of scientific discovery have already been taken from the bottom of the tree of knowledge. To get to the top of the tree of knowledge more efforts and more resources are needed.

Therefore, research is the crucial component in our development strategy.

Until recently, policy on research funding in Kazakhstan was focused on sustaining the existing institutions rather than the development of research and innovative mechanisms.

Because of that, there was insufficient funding for high quality research, and few opportunities existed for research jobs in-country. Intellectual property was not managed in a structured fashion while long-term venture-like funds have not been established to help develop an industry.

Recently Kazakhstan adopted a new law on science that is expected to radically change the research environment in Kazakhstan. The new law prioritizes the following areas:

- Energy research
- Innovative technologies in processing of raw materials
- Innovation and telecommunication technologies
- Life Sciences
- Basic research in humanities and other fields

The new law establishes national research councils in the relevant priority areas and three streams of research funding:

- Basic funding to support scientific infrastructure, property, and salaries
- Grant funding to support research programs
- Program-target funding to resolve strategic challenges

In addition, the new law establishes a system for peer review of research grant applications.

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In 2012, the government funding for research and development is expected to reach US\$331 million, which is 40 percent higher than in 2011. The plan is to exceed 1 percent GDP in research funding.

In the light of these new developments and funding opportunities, researchers in Kazakhstan aspired to prove their capabilities to the world's scientific arena. We recognize that the best way to be internationally recognized is through publishing scientific results in international peer reviewed journals with high impact factor. Indeed, this is one of the critical and well recognized measures of scientific merit.

Unfortunately, Kazakhstan and the other countries of Central Asia are far behind in publication rate and impact compared to such nations as the US, Japan, Korea, Russia, etc. Only 439 articles have been published so far in peer reviewed journals by Kazakhstani researchers, while the rate of publications in the other Central Asian countries is even lower. Despite the fact that the publication rate has grown over the past decade, it is still insufficient to demonstrate the regions significance in the area of research and development.

In this regard, we are pleased to announce the Inaugural Issue of The Central Asian Journal of Global Health (cajgh.pitt.edu), which is a peer-reviewed scientific journal developed as a result of a partnership of Nazarbayev University with the University of Pittsburgh's Supercourse program (www.pitt.edu/~super1). The program was developed within the framework of the World Health Organization's Collaborating Centre for Disease Monitoring and Telecommunications at the University of Pittsburgh.

This is a newly launched journal aimed at publishing research data, reviews, and other important issues relevant to various fields of public health and biomedicine. Specifically, it focuses on quality

publishing and is aimed at increasing the number of peer reviewed publication coming from researchers from Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

Our best hope is that scientists, doctors, epidemiologists and other researchers will use this opportunity to present their results and observations to the worldwide scientific community.

We believe that this new initiative will help us to achieve our strategic goals of transforming medicine and healthcare in Kazakhstan from a Curative to a Preemptive paradigm, accelerating translation of research findings from the bench to the bedside to the community. It will also help in our efforts to provide the evidence and knowledge base to allow for a rational transformation of Kazakhstan's healthcare system.

Almaz Sharman, MD, PhD, Professor of Medicine

Deputy CEO for Medicine, Nazarbayev University, Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan

<http://zdrav.kz/almazsharman/en>

dr.sharman@gmail.com

www.twitter.com/almazsharman

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