

“Against research”: reflections from a life-long journey in basic science, clinical medicine, and medical education « Contre la recherche » : réflexions d’un parcours de toute une vie en sciences fondamentales, en médecine clinique et en formation médicale

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Published ahead of issue: Sept 27, 2025 published: Nov 6, 2025. CMEJ 2025, 16(5) Available at <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.82184>

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Dear Editors,

“Against Research:” Professor D’Eon¹ claimed that in medical education, research must remain closely connected to practice and that researchers should build on preexisting knowledge. Having spent 46 years as a basic electron-microscopist, an active obstetric surgeon, and a medical educator, I resonate with his view. Comparing clinical medicine research with medical education may complement his perspective.

There was a time when a great clinician could also be a great basic researcher—Virchow and Koch. Today, basic scientists and clinicians generally occupy distinct roles, and no one would fault a scientist for focusing on discovery rather than immediate application. Modern medicine emphasizes role sharing: basic scientists advance laboratory research, while clinicians translate findings into practice.

In contrast, medical education still reflects a “good old” culture: researchers are, and should be, active educators. Educators typically devise and test new teaching methods directly in real-world settings, often building on preexisting knowledge from other fields. Education researchers cannot remain detached; they must stay at the teaching front line.

Thus, both clinical medicine and medical education researchers should follow the same two principles: build on preexisting knowledge and consider real-world application. However, in clinical medicine, role sharing is more common. In contrast, education researchers often observe the entire research process, from design to real-world outcome. Being both researcher and practitioner may be a distinctive strength, less common among basic scientists and clinical researchers.

Medical education research should not be an end in itself; it must serve real-world practice. D’Eon’s call remains timely and important.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding this article.

Funding: None.

Authorship: All authors have each signed their own attestation statement that they meet the requirements of authors. The lead author, in addition to their own attestation as an author, has signed an attestation that all authors listed on this paper meet the requirements for authors.

Edited by: Marcel D’Eon (editor-in-chief)

Reference

1. D’Eon MF. Against research: a case for the scholarship of application in Medical Education. *Can Med Educ J*. 2025;16(3):1-5. <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.81806>.