

## Letter to the Editor

### Sanctions on Health Education

#### *Dear Editor,*

With advances in technology, the way we learn has changed dramatically in recent years. Nowadays, many online courses are available over the Internet with the aim of providing quality education for all the people across the globe. But, recently when I was trying to register for a free online course offered by the Stanford University through Stanford's online learning initiative on interpreting randomized clinical trials, I realized that I cannot sign up for the course. Being determined to get to the bottom of why I wasn't allowed to join the course, I contacted the course operation manager and explained my issue. After exchanging a series of emails, I was being told in the end that "US trade sanctions restrictions prohibit Stanford University from providing access to these Continuing Medical Education online courses to users in Iran." I wasn't allowed to enroll in this medical course simply because I was from Iran. Imposing embargos on some technologies would be understandable, but prohibiting one to participate in a course on how to interpret clinical trials, which can

only nurture new treatments that could help everyone around the globe, is another thing. This very incident confronts us with the question that whether access to education, qua education, whose goal is to "promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups" according to article 26 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>1</sup> should ever be part of a trade sanction.

**Conflicts of Interest:** I am an Iranian.

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#### **Reference**

1. United Nations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available from URL: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> (Accessed July 13, 2016)