

DIALOGUE, DEBATE, AND DISCUSSION

Editor's Introduction to a Discussion, Debate, and Dialogue (D3) Forum on the Similarities and Differences between Medical and Management Research

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In the previous issue (Vol. 20, Issue 3), we published a perspective article entitled 'Responsible Research: Reflections of Two Business Scholars Doing Mental Health Research during COVID-19', by Zhang and Chen. The pair represents two management scholars who ventured into medical research during the COVID pandemic. Zhang and Chen shared their insights from this exploration with the broader community of management scholars, highlighting key differences in how the field of medicine balances the goals of rigor and relevance and judges what research deserves to be published.

MOR Editor-in-Chief Xiao-Ping Chen and I found that the piece raised important issues for the field of management that deserved further discussion. For me, one key question was how feasible it would be to import practices of studying urgent and pressing societal issues from the field of medicine to management. For this reason, we asked two senior scholars, one from a macro perspective (Jerry Davis) and one from a micro perspective (Ray Friedman), to comment on the piece. To stimulate their reflections without limiting what they could write about, I posed several questions:

1. To what extent do you agree with how Zhang and Chen portray different research practices in the fields of medicine and management?
2. Related to this, are the fields of management and medicine sufficiently alike to warrant the importation of methods and publication practices from medicine?
3. Do you see important topics in management that should be urgently studied but are presently not being worked on?

As the initiative to create more Responsible Research in Business and Management already dates back a decade, I later added in my interactions with Ray Friedman a fourth question:

4. Have we become better in the past 10 years at studying things that matter to society?

In the pages that follow, you will find thought-provoking commentaries by Davis and Friedman. I find them so compelling that I will have my doctoral students read the reflections along with the original essay. Davis argues that management scholarship would benefit from focusing more on researching significant societal problems that may be transient, as illustrated by how medicine and public health responded to the COVID outbreak. Friedman notes that management scholars already deal with important societal problems but that we do not 'speak to these problems with a level of *clarity* and *certainly* that exists in medical fields'. He cautions that becoming more focused on facts rather than theory may make management *less* rather than *more* relevant.

The collection manages to bring into focus questions about the nature of the subject matter in our field that every scholar of management must grapple with in their research. If you have ideas to continue this debate, please write us a Letter to the Editor.