


Icarus Syndrome: the science whitewashed vanity

Síndrome de Ícaro: a vaidade caiada na ciência

Marvyn de Santana do Sacramento^{1,2,3} , Rodrigo de Freitas Fontes¹ , Edileuza Ferreira de Jesus¹ 

1. Faculdade do Centro Oeste Paulista, Bauru, SP, Brazil

2. Actus Cordios Reabilitação Cardiovascular, Salvador, BA, Brazil

3. Centro Universitário Social da Bahia, Salvador, BA, Brazil

One of the beautiful stories in Greek mythology tells the myth of Icarus, the boy with wax wings. In the tale, Dédalos, an inventor kept in captivity, built pairs of wings to escape from Crete in the company of his son, Icarus. However, even after alerting him to the importance of keeping some distance from the sun, Icarus advances higher and higher until the fateful moment when the connections between his wings start to melt, launching him in free fall against the rocks.

Such a metaphor can portray what we commonly observe in scientific research. Dédalos is the personified allusion of the zealous researcher and aware of his responsibility. Researcher who seeks the truth using the scientific method to build an idea that leads him to just lessons. These lessons may contribute to the growth of knowledge and also of humanity. Ícaro, on the other hand, mimics the desires of researchers and immediate consumers, sometimes naive, sometimes concealed in dark desires, which lead not only to themselves but to many others to the rocks.

The passion for the work field itself implies biased choices. This affinity reinforces positivist thinking about interventions, clouding skeptical judgment. At first, such confusion may involve the use of inappropriate literature for decision-making in clinical practice, to cite the design and quality of research. In the second instance, the mistaken extrapolation from the research, regardless of the clinical aspects of each patient, dramatically alters the likelihood of success.

The treatment of disease (imprisonment) by physical exercise (wings) depends on the deep scrutiny and overlapping of human physiology and exercise, on the understanding of pathophysiology and its implications for func-

nality, and on the accurate analysis of the most robust scientific evidence on what is intends to use as a treatment. These elements, associated with practical experience, allow the elaboration of treatment and adequate goals for the recovery of health. However, like the wings of Icarus, physical exercise has limitations that, if not seen and respected, may lead to disastrous effects.

The Sun used in this story represents the knowledge that makes us see the limits of our praxis with diaphanous. The worst ignorance that a researcher or health professional can cultivate is the vanity of unfounded knowledge. This whitewashed vanity, obscured by beliefs, speculations and ideas filled with personal interest, will at some point melt like the wax wings of Icarus.

Graduates, professionals, professors and researchers must always be attentive not to engender and not to be linked to this decoy of whitewashed vanity. This behavioral lapse present in colleges and universities, in professional practice and also in science must be combated from the inside out, that is, removed first from our core. Only with our example of humility will we be able to modify the spectrum that surrounds us. This personal and constant scrutiny will allow us to prevent our wings from being destroyed and our flights to be safer and more distant.