

15 January 2026

To:

The Minister of Education
MK Yoav Kisch

Subject: The Independence of Medical Research in Israel

Medical research in Israel is one of the cornerstones of the national health and scientific system. It enables the development of new diagnostic methods, innovative treatments, and a deeper understanding of disease mechanisms, thereby saving lives, improving quality of life, and placing Israel at the forefront of global science. A fundamental condition for the success of this research is full academic independence, which allows researchers to choose their research questions based on scientific curiosity and on clinical needs arising from the field, rather than on non-professional influences. When this safeguard is weakened, our ability to generate new and relevant medical knowledge is impaired.

The Israeli National Academy for Science in Medicine is a leading body established six years ago to advance medical research in Israel conducted by physician-scientists. The Academy brings together approximately 55 physician-researchers from medical centers across the country and works to strengthen the status of the physician-scientist as a central pillar of the healthcare system. Its members include senior full professors, department heads, practicing physicians, clinical researchers, and scientists who have made significant contributions to medicine and science, from both the center and the periphery of the country. The Academy has also established a Young Academy, which currently includes approximately 25 promising early-career physician-researchers.

The attempts to amend the Council for Higher Education (CHE) Law—including initiatives that seek to transfer key powers from the Council for Higher Education to the government, to allow the appointment and dismissal of senior officials as “positions of trust,” and to dissolve the CHE with each new Knesset—constitute a politicization of a body that is meant to be professional and independent. Additional proposed amendments seek to grant the government authority to set research priorities, undermining the traditional checks and balances between the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC), the CHE, and the academic institutions.

We view these proposals as a danger to medical research, to the training of physicians, and to medical services in Israel.

The physician-scientist has a unique role: operating at the intersection of the clinic and the laboratory, between the patient and the complex biological processes occurring within the body. This integration enables the identification of genuine medical needs, the development of data-driven solutions, and the rapid translation of basic discoveries into real treatments. Physician-scientists are the human resource that allows the healthcare system to remain

current, flexible, and innovative. However, their ability to develop depends on an academic environment free from external pressures, in which decisions regarding desirable research directions, staffing standards, and training content are determined on the basis of scientific expertise.

Israel has an impressive medical-research ecosystem that integrates leading hospitals, universities, research centers, and interdisciplinary scientific communities. This success rests on the trust of the international scientific community that the Israeli system operates solely according to professional standards, and on public trust that the medical knowledge produced in Israel meets the highest standards. Any blurring of the boundaries between professional considerations and non-scientific pressures may undermine this trust, distance international partners, and restrict the scope of activity of physician-scientists.

If Israel's healthcare system wishes to preserve its research strength, it must protect the "Chinese wall" between the setting of academic standards and any influence not grounded in expertise. The meaning of this wall is not isolation or detachment, but the preservation of researchers' working conditions, the ability to ask difficult questions, and freedom of scientific decision-making. In a world in which medicine is advancing rapidly, erosion of the independence of medical research directly harms the ability to develop breakthrough treatments and to provide patients with the most advanced medical care.

Medical research, and the system that enables it, cannot thrive without academic independence. The goal is not political but professional: to ensure the continued growth of medical science in Israel, to safeguard the status of the physician-scientist as a leader of clinical progress, and to maintain the state's ability to provide high-quality, knowledge-based, future-oriented medical care.

As Minister of Education, we call upon you to halt the developing process and to preserve the independence of the Council for Higher Education and the Planning and Budgeting Committee, and not to allow political influence over these professional bodies.

Sincerely,

Prof. Jacob Sosna
President, The Israeli National Academy for Scientific Medicine
On behalf of the members of the Academy