PhDs: never boring, never dry

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Dear Sir,

I read the debate on PhD as a necessary requirement for future physicists [1] with great interest and would like to thank the authors for a stimulating discussion. Despite this being an ‘old chestnut’, both sides have brought new and refreshing arguments to the table and I learned a new term (‘credentialism’), which I am not afraid to use in future.

Please allow me also to add a few considerations to the debate that may be worth considering. PhD candidates are typically paid less than a minimum wage for outrageous working hours, which adds capacity for suffering to the qualities a PhD physicist brings to the job. In addition to this a PhD is a qualification that is more or less standardised and accepted all over the world, which is something that cannot be said of certification despite significant efforts to develop mechanisms for it [2]. It is interesting to see what employers value; the annual salary surveys of the American Association of Physicist in Medicine (AAPM) chart this well (www.aapm.org). In 1999 a PhD added some 15% to one’s salary—in 2019 this reduced to less than 5% with certification making the big difference. But certification also has become a lot more stringent with accreditation of contributing universities and clinics. It’s relevance is also significantly

diminished without documented professional practice and continuing professional development. In contrast a PhD is for life... for better or worse.

In terms of the winner of the debate, I ended up decisively in favour of both sides of the argument. Thank you very much for this enjoyable read.

Yours sincerely

Tomas Kron

References

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