

Has Research become the Necessary Evil?

Mustehsan Bashir

The new Editorial team is delighted to publish its second issue. We are infinitely grateful to all our contributors and reviewers. Hopefully, our dream of producing a journal that would be a pride for our association shall soon be realized.

Medical writing has been termed the “necessary evil” to ascend the professional ladder. University rankings today depend upon the consistent churning out of research papers, much like flour from a grinding mill. While the task may be run of the mill for researchers in some other fields, we as prime care givers have clinical responsibilities that consume most of our work-place time and efforts. The single three- or four-day’s mandatory workshop for post-graduate trainees on research methodology is insufficient for any real endeavors in research. Making a dissertation or research paper mandatory to appear in a post graduate examination has not solved the dilemma. Many post-graduate trainees, frazzled by the enormity of the academic curriculum, and ill equipped to delve into a hitherto unexplored field resort to paying professionals to write the much-dreaded research thesis. Many others have not been able to appear in the examination on time due to unfinished research. Can we really blame them?

The lack of bio-statisticians attached with clinical departments is another major impediment for quality research. Many of us have had the somewhat humbling experience of chasing statisticians, inundating them with unanswered phone calls and texts with

pleadings for analysis of a study. Delays like these are discouraging and distract the focus of the researcher.

Analogous to sending a soldier into a nuclear battlefield unarmed, many clinical departments lack internet facilities and resource materials. Without a comprehensive literature search there is no research. The pressure of getting eligibility for an exam or a promotion in the face of these major hurdles fosters the culture of bogus or substandard research.

If we are to maintain pace in this ruthless and relentless rat race of producing maximum research publications, the solution does not perhaps lie in flogging a horse that has never learnt how to gallop. Changing our strategies and long-term vision is required. Considering that the undergraduate academic curriculum is already overwhelming, mandatory internship with biostatisticians or designated researchers could be introduced before the completion of house job certificate is given. Similarly, dissertations can be completed and handed over after a post-graduate examination is passed but should be a pre-requisite for the award of the final post-graduate diploma or degree. This would allow the students to focus on their curriculum and allocate more time for research once they are free from the burden of studies rather than hiring the “writing services”.

Since research is one of the prime yardsticks for the ranking of an institution, it is only

logical that special funds be dispatched to various departments for resource purposes and the necessary manpower be made available to facilitate and help in research. Medical literature should be an expression of

our professional creativity. It should be enjoyed rather than dangle over our heads like the sword of Damocles to prove our eligibility for some other task.