

Uprising Trend of Research Among Medical Students in Pakistan

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Abstract

Medical students these days are increasingly involved in the research projects, as well as article writing. The most common reason for increase in research activity is to improve the Curriculum Vitae for competitive USA and UK residencies. Furthermore few medical students want to do research at an early stage of medical career in order to get exposure to research for the postgraduate training purposes. Despite of all these interesting facts, there are various hurdles that medical students are facing, such as poor guidance of mentors, hardship during data collection, lack of time for research purpose due to study related barriers, rejections from journal, high fee charges from the reputable journals etc. all these factors demotivate medical students to pursue research.

Keywords: Medical researchers, residency.

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Introduction

In the past, in a low-income country with fewer resources such as Pakistan, medical research was conducted mostly by scientists working in the research centers, which were financed by private organizations. Recently, there has been up rise of research in the number of medical undergraduates involved in various government medical institutions¹⁻³.

In South East Asia research is not encouraged, especially in developing countries with limited resources and most of the time research is promoted by scholarship programs¹. When studied in detail, various factors have also been reported in the past such as lack of skilled mentors and proper guidance², other perplexity including time required for medical studies, wards and examinations³.

A study conducted in India reported that around 91% of interns have not done research during their medical school because of lack of time availability, predominantly absence of sufficient break between semesters². On the other side, in Western world trend of research is at its upsurge, in order to encourage medical students to pursue career in research, after research electives 42% of medical students ($p=0.029$) reported to continue career in research, because of some other benefit such as development of critical appraisal, information literacy, and critical thinking skills, also easy selection into postgraduate training programs⁴. It is reported that postgraduates do have good knowledge regarding research but only 4% of the residents get an original article published⁵. Medical colleges in Pakistan seem to have evolved their curriculum in such a manner so that students may get time to improve their credentials and promote research activity⁶.

A gradual rise in the percentage of students involved in research was observed from the first to the final year among students of private medical univer-

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sities, while an opposite trend was seen at the public universities, when medical students were asked for the reason to do research, most common reply was to improve their credentials for residency in America⁷. According to Aslam et al.¹, getting a research project published is always inspiring for students, but hardships, such as lack of good mentors, the work of data-collection and entry, and responding to reviewers comments from journals, together made research a difficult experience for the students in low-income countries especially those with lack of good mentors when get their project rejected are more often demotivated and decide not to do research projects, therefore good mentors must be selected and they must ensure that students get proper learning regarding rationale of the study and also for the remaining proceedings. Students most of the time wants to learn the correct ways to conduct research studies. The experience of research enhances students skills in searching and critically appraising medical research, rationale thinking, writing research article⁸. Medical students and doctors throughout the world are involved in the research; doctors in USA do two to three years of Post doctorate research to get into highly competitive residencies in order to improve their curriculum vitae⁹. Hence, in a developing country like Pakistan it is the central role of government and private organizations to support and promote research activity among medical students, not only to increase rationale thinking among students but also to contribute the knowledge of regional reference values and data for treatment purpose, local culture based treatment and beliefs regarding various diseases and other aspects of medicine.

Conclusion

Most students do research to improve their Curriculum Vitae in order to get into competitive residencies in the USA and few also want to pursue career as a research scientist but the students face hardships such as lack of time, errors during the making of their projects and lack of good mentors and rejection from journals.

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