

Year 2005-2006 at Student's Corner of Journal of Pakistan Medical Association

Madam, The aim of involving medical students in research at an earlier stage of their medical education still remains an un-attained feat in most of the developing countries including Pakistan. This limits the production of quality research articles and makes it difficult for a medical journal to run a quality section dedicated solely to the contributions of students.¹ The student's corner was started in January 1998 in the Journal of Pakistan Medical Association (JPMA) with its first issue of the year.² The involvement of medical students into research has been advocated as a crucial factor to the development of a research culture in South Asia.³ The analysis, reviews and audits of student research publication would definitely help this cause.

From July 2005 through June 2006, Journal of Pakistan Medical Association (JPMA) published eleven (11) articles under the student's Corner. One issue (August 2005) did not have any article under the student's corner. The authors of all of these eleven (11) articles (100%) belonged to The Aga Khan University (AKU) Karachi. There was no contribution from any other medical college or institution. Of total, two authors contributed to ten articles (91%) as first or second author. This year, only one issue of the journal was without student's corner, which shows an improvement when compared with the last three years.¹

An important point to note from the above facts is that all the articles were contributed by students from The Aga Khan University (AKU) which belongs to the private sector. A previous review by Aslam et al also showed a major contribution (over two thirds of the articles) from AKU.¹ The cause of this gap between public sector and private institutions in Pakistan is also not known but lack of emphasis on research in the curriculum, under-developed system to support evidence-based-medicine, lack of funds for research and well-trained mentors should be investigated. And, on the basis of evidence corrective policy measures should be taken if a bright future of medicine is desired in the country.

Nearly half of the articles (in 2005-06) (5/11, 45%)

were case reports and next in the rank was Letter-to-the-Editor/Short communication. Though this trend is different from what was reported by Aslam et al, it is generally believed that writing case reports or letter-to-the Editor is easier for a beginner and provides them with self-esteem associated with the concept of student publication and medical manuscript writing may be started with writing letters and case reports.⁵ Also, medical students usually have busy schedules and are stressed out by their academics.⁶ Writing a case report or correspondence does not consume much time when compared with an original article. An original article requires a long period of dedicated work spanning over study planning data collection, entry and analysis and writing a manuscript for publication.

Aamer Imdad¹, Abdul Waheed²

Aga Khan University¹, Karachi, Syed Sabir Trust Hospital², Lahore.

References

1. Aslam F, Waheed A. An Audit of the Student's Corner Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association. *J Pak Med Assoc* 2005;55:517-9.
2. No authors listed. From the Editor, Student's Corner. *J Pak Med Assoc* 1998; 48:85.
3. Aslam F, Shakir M, Qayyum MA. Why medical students are crucial to the future of research in South Asia. *PLoS Med* 2; 2005:e322.
4. Aslam F, Khan AM. A starting point for medical students. *J Coll Phys Surg Pak* 2006;16:84.
5. Shapiro SL, Shapiro DE, Schwartz GE. Stress Management in Medical Education: a review of literature. *Acad Med* 2000;75:748-59.