

Letter to the Editor

Time to banish the three evils of medical research

Madam, as medical research is thriving in Pakistan, it is also being subjected to the evils of the human mind. As physicians, we take oath to a code of conduct that we would not harm a human soul and/or body. As medical scientists, we also need to re-visit the same oath. On a simpler note there are three major regions of promoting misdemeanor in medical research. These are explained in detail at each level; the primary being a clinician's need to publish. Leading to them forcing statistician to play magic tricks. Role of the reviewers and editors' eagerness and expertise also counts.

Experiences from our daily practices of medical research point out that our society is no different from any other. All age groups are involved in forging signatures, disrespecting International Committee of Medical Journal Editors authorship guidelines,¹ fabricating data sets and plagiarizing. The worst aspect is that certain clinicians who are not well trained in medical research and wish to get published only to fulfill their institution's promotion criteria are showing the wrong path to our future generation.

The role of a statistician is also to be highlighted here. They are never to be solely held responsible but only that they give in to the pressure of the primary investigators. The best of them have the power and are often excellent illusionist. However, the medical research circle is save only to a limit as nine out of ten researches in medical specialty journals are observational.² The pharmaceutical research makes maximum use of the skills of such illusionists.

The final and the most significant aspect is the

burden that these wrongdoers give to the reviewers and editors. Only the medical journals with good circulations have formal methodological review but in general the standards in terms of statistical methods and logic are not up to the mark everywhere in the world.³

The current Pakistani medical universities are using medical students and young graduates who have no qualification in terms of medical research to fulfill their accreditations. This greatly affects the quality of data and inferences extracted from it. We might be drawing conclusions from these studies that are errors leading to greater harm to our patients. If professionally trained and qualified medical scientists are well paid we can address this problem with ease. In summary, all these three areas need to promote checks and punishments to prevent promotions of ill elements of in the medical circle on the whole.

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