

Readers are leaders in publishing

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With the shifting medical curriculum and assessment format; medical and nursing students are not reading and writing as extensively as needed. Best choice questions are focused on specific topics. In turn the students focus on studying to pass exams with few to truly gain knowledge. Most are keen to get involved in medical research but are seldom interested in brainstorming or manuscript writing. A study involving final year medical students and fresh graduates from Karachi showed that 79% of them subjectively reported having a regular medical journal reading habit. When inquired in detail, 50% acknowledged reading articles after four or more months. Of these 65% recalled reading their first article as an undergraduate. According to the same study, 28% had authorships. Only 31% had a habit of reading articles regarding medical education, 23% read about medical ethics and 17% on both topics. Unfortunately, 29% had no interest in such topics.¹

Reading has always been fruitful and causes no harm in any field. Scientists have been exploring various aspects of reading-to-writing as this would transform the way we learn and practice.^{2,3} The importance of reading is manifold in the field of medicine and medical research. The more informed a physician is, the more efficient he or she can be in managing the patients. Large numbers of medical journals publish latest ways of disease detection, management and teaching techniques. To survive in this competitive medical career, it is necessary for health care personnel (HCP) to actively keep up with the latest techniques and advancements. David Piers Thomas worries about the fact that few doctors who take up the task of writing medical articles lack the ability to comprehend all possible reasons for their findings.⁴ Few do not correlate and reflect the most scientific explanation for their findings. Here the job of medical journal reviewers and editors increases manifold. Most researchers fail to do a comprehensive literature search at the start of their project. There can be numerous reasons

behind it but resultantly it gives incomplete viewpoints and explanations to the readers.

This era of Evidence Based Medicine (EBM) also emphasizes the importance of reading. In the past two decades or so, it has not only invaded clinical dealing of the patients but also the way HCP learn, teach and explore new theories.⁵ Reading plays a key role in keeping oneself informed about the latest and rare methods of medicine. EBM utilizes critical reading to the best of its ability with in-depth analysis of published trials and by identifying and testing ways to improve on healthcare. Today's HCP can improve their clinical skills by reading articles stressing on the statistics, public health aspect, epidemiology and ethical elements of their patient care.

We need to promote undergraduate and postgraduate students to have a frequent reading habit of medical journals. They must be encouraged to read up on any topic of their own interest and to discuss it with their mentors on weekly basis. This would not only improve their clinical skills but also expose them to medical journals and reporting formats. Consequentially when these students would write in biomedical journals the quality of reporting would improve.

References

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