

Evolution in research and editing

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Research has become the absolute need of the day. It is part of human nature to look for something new and exciting which will bring a change in the existing conditions. The results have then to be publicized. Some people are born investigators. Others are compelled to do so by the requirements of their institutions. Mandatory are student's research and publication of research articles for promotion of faculty members. Occasionally there are a few senior members of the profession having a great desire to add figures to their list of publication which at times can be undeserving.

The difficulties encountered by editors include the decision on who is the right author. This takes up a lot of time, writing mails and frustrations on not getting responses. Medical institutions also add to this list by not practicing ethical policies, if they have some to start with and also not penalizing their faculty members if they are caught red handed. A major reason behind this disorder is the lack of formal research training amongst clinicians who are forced to become clinicians cum researchers by their institutes. Then come in pressure calls to consider early publication of articles. Getting an article to travel from submission to seeing it in print is a long and tedious journey. The editor of the journal is in the forefront facing the authors, reviewers, copy editors and printer. Halts are present at every stage and require revisions. At times a lot of ground work is done in the editor's office to help the authors and save time, which can be hidden and unappreciated.¹

Learning Research was a new section started in 2012 in the Journal of Pakistan Medical Association, for the benefit of young researchers, students and also the senior members of the medical profession who are willing to move with the trends of time. We tried to include most of the basic subject matter required for conducting biomedical research and reporting it subsequently. Topics therefore started with 'Selecting a research topic'. Others were importance of reading,

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study designs, questionnaire designing, sampling techniques, statistics, both descriptive and inferential, rights of researchers, submission process of a manuscript, basics of medical writing and ethics in research and writing. Every article was peer reviewed by a senior specialist of the field and technically edited before being published. It was an uphill task but the results achieved were satisfying. We received a large number of responses from our readers appreciating this venture and thanking the authors. This was an encouragement to continue this section in 2013 with other important issues of the area.

Research and its publication have gone a long way. Evolution and changes have been brought in to make it standard and universal.² Some decades back when electronic gadgets were not commonly in use, researchers had to use a pencil and paper. Figures were calculated manually and only frequencies could be acquired. With the development of technology as computers and introduction of various software, conducting research and writing it, has become simple and accurate. Starting with the calculation of the sample size and going on to analysis. Unlike the past, wonder calculators are readily available. With the correct training and simple taps of the key board results are expressed as figures and tables in seconds. Complex diagrams can be used to compare entire data sets.

Similarly with the advancement of reporting guidelines writing one's research has also improved. Introduction of the Equator Guidelines has been a great assistance in marginalizing the types of research and writing it scientifically.³ Most journals follow similar instructions to authors. The International Committee for Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), has made standard guidelines which can be accessed by all authors.⁴ Following the instructions helps in producing a good article with a good probability of being accepted. Practice is necessary to write a good article with background reading. This needs hard work and the article is written and re-written before it is ready for submission. Conveniences have been made possible for the authors. It is best to write oneself but if difficulties are faced, then there are websites which help you to write

correctly. (Author Aid).⁵ If one needs to improve on the language, such services are also available. References are conveniently accessed by using Endnote unlike the times when the authors had to type in all the references with special attention to all the commas, semi-colons and full stops. Data bases such as Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) improves the key words used by authors.⁶

The evolution in research and editing is ongoing. To keep abreast with the changes the authors and the editorial staff have to be well equipped with the armamentarium of writing and reviewing. JPMA in the year 2013 looks forward to another continuing series on LEARNING RESEARCH with topics inclusive of Science behind reviewing, publication ethics especially plagiarism, data fabrication and falsification, ethical review committees and their importance, proposal for grant writing, how to make a poster and oral

presentation and many more. JPMA is proud to provide this assistance to its readers, students and faculty members of medical institutions to improve the standard of biomedical research and clinical care. It will enhance the image of our authors and the country.

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