Editorial

Research should not be need based!

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Research, whether academic research or clinical trials (drug trials), is very essential for the advancement of medical science. If we are writing paracetamol in general practice & haloperidol in psychiatry, so confidently, it is because of the earlier academic research, clinical trials, & also our clinical experience.

Equally important is academic research. By this I mean research which is not clinical trials. This includes thesis work, presentation of papers in scientific conferences, & publication in journals; & other related aspects.

Frankly speaking, both types of research are inseparable. If we don't have inclination, interest or calibre to do academic research, we cannot even do clinical trials properly, because both type of research involves same kind of work.

Till some time back, there was not much of interest on part of medical professionals to do academic research, though few of them were actually involved in clinical trials. One of the reasons for this could be that one gets monetary benefits by getting involved in a clinical trial. Also all aspects, including protocol designing, statistical analysis, etc are taken care by the sponsor. In contrast to this, one doesn't get such immediate returns in academic research. There are some who do bit of paper presentation & publication during post graduation, because their professors have pressurised them, but once they finish PG they stop doing everything. When asked why, the answer would be 'no time', 'too busy with practice', 'lot of home responsibilities'!

Now the scenario is bit changing, thankfully 'for good'. Those who had an eye on 'greener pastures abroad', were already doing academic research because that is one of the desirable criteria for studying & working abroad, & one would have an edge over other candidates. In India also now we are going to see this happen, in fact this has already started. MCI in its recent guidelines, has stated that the desirable criteria for promotions for teaching posts is publication in an indexed National / International journal. These directions from MCI have thrilled few professionals; while others are relaxed saying that it doesn't affect them as they are already in higher posts. Many others, esp. youngsters are perturbed & annoyed, saying that it is too early for MCI to do so, and they should have taken stock of ground realities before taking such decisions. These 'realities', they say, are 'not having enough research facilities in institutes', 'not having enough time & expertise', etc.

Whatever excuses' we give; the 'reality', the 'fact' is that we cannot stop these regulations to come into force very soon. So why shouldn't we get prepared for such eventuality?

But beware 'there is a bit of risk inherent in such decisions'. Now we may have low quality papers getting published, very soon, with lot of biases & recommendations, & other such undesirable things. Also there will be a spurt of 'n' number of low quality journals, with vested interests.

So what is the way out? We already have lot of journals! There is a dire need to improve the quality of existing journals; to have the papers peer-reviewed, if possible double-blind. Also the papers should confirm to the standardized format of 'manuscript submission guidelines'. We should have a print version & also online version, so that we can make our presence felt, which will make online submission easy & we become more eco-friendly by reducing wastage of paper (this is a catchy word in 21st century; people will listen to us if we keep talking about environment!!). Lastly, hopefully, getting it indexed, if possible, in pubmed!!! Big dream isn't it.

Coming to the title of the editorial: Research should not be need based! Let me clarify, 'Research should always be need-based', but these needs should include deficiency in our understanding & knowledge of science, needs of the community, needs of persons with mental illness, our incompleteness in understanding our patients, which is so essential in medical science, esp. in psychiatry. Our research should fill the existing lacunae of what we already know. We should deter from doing 'replication studies', 'there is no such study from India, sort of studies', unless & until it is absolutely essential for understanding Indian patients, esp. if culture significantly influences those aspects.

Let us also do academic research, not just clinical trials!
Rajshekhar: Research should not be need based!

Let us do research not just for promotions, or for recognition; but also for the advancement of medical science!!

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