

THE UNTHINKING PURSUIT OF PUBLICATIONS: AN EYE OPENER

Dear Sir,

In today's scientifically and technologically advanced world, undue importance is being given to research and especially to publications, but more so in third world countries. Pakistan is no different in this respect. Needless to say, research and publications are increasingly being used as a criterion for progression in one's career, apart from receiving a large number of grants from donor agencies.⁽¹⁾ This has resulted in more and more medical students, house officers and postgraduate students running after research projects in order to get their work published rather than focusing on their studies and core clinical practice.

Having a large number of research articles published in indexed journals does not make one a good doctor. Without a doubt, the slogan of medicine today is "evidence-based medicine",^(2,3) which relies on research publications, but to regard these publications as academic degrees is a dangerous trend that needs to be nipped in the bud, or it may prove to be harmful to our noble profession in the long run. Research and publications are a healthy exercise that promotes local evidence regarding various diseases and offers the best possible management techniques available, but young doctors and students are being unduly encouraged to beef up their curriculum vitae with mediocre research projects without any consideration for quality.

The time that is devoted to research is probably the same amount of time that is compromised for clinical practice, and being a doctor is not all about research publications; it is all about practice. It involves a unique set of skills: the ability to deal with patients, the honing of one's communication skills, split-second decision-making and above all, the ability to deal with stressful emergency situations. It is all but natural that some doctors shine at research, and they deserve all the encouragement and remunerations due to them; however, non-research talents should also be recognised and given due credit.

The increased promotion of a publication culture should be discouraged, especially at the embryonic stages of a medical career, where greater focus should be placed on enhancing the abovementioned skills. Instead of using publication, the journal impact factor and research as the sole criterion for assessment, a better performance evaluation system⁽⁴⁾ should be introduced for advancements in one's career.

Yours sincerely,

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