

Promoting Research in Resource Constraints Settings

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The Higher Education Commission (HEC) to raise standard has recently revised the criteria for promotion in teaching sector in various fields, including medicine. Similar standardization has also been done by Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC)¹. This criterion based standardization includes number of research publication in addition to teaching experience. Setting the promotional criterion on the basis of research publications is an effort to develop and promote research culture in the country. This seems very logical in view of the fact that health policies and action plans can never be appropriately developed and implemented in the absence or lack of data regarding true health situation of the region. This would mean that quality of research in medical field would directly affect the health of the nation.

In this scenario, it is of course a matter of satisfaction that HEC and PMDC are, constantly engaged in efforts to enhance research culture, but it is noteworthy that one should look into the reasons why there is a need to do so by these institutions.

It is not less than bomb blast to conclude what would happen when a population of 18 cores people with a significant percentage, below poverty line², gets less than 4% of annual budget for the health needs. More over two aspects are to be seen with concern; one is why there is a decline in research interest, particularly quality research. other, primary cause seems that when a researcher realizes no impact of the research on health policy making³, he will be frustrated and do it with lesser zeal or with different goal in mind. Then, there is lack of encouragement, both financial, and social, for conducting quality research. The medical practice in Pakistan neither encourages nor trains clinicians for scientific writing. Medical professionals find a better way to enhance their take homes, by doing private practice, which renders them lacking enough time to think, design and conduct research. Lack of enough time is also contributed by additional assignment for a faculty, including teaching, and administrative affairs, further making difficult by lack of enough faculty members to look after these tasks⁴. The problems are complicated further due to lack of facilities and research-support even if there is an interest and opportunity on part of the faculty members. The limited or non access to latest scientific journals, non-

availability of scientific instruments, funds and supporting staff, dearth of quality journals and published material hinder the possibilities of genuine research. Therefore researches are limited to faculty members (who are also busy in under- and post-graduate teaching, and administrative affairs) for promotion to next grades, for which only a few journals are recognized to cater all requirements. This also leads to a competition which becomes unhealthy at times, in the form of gifted papers, ghost authorships and influence on editorial concerns members of journals.

The allocation of funds, number of publications and other criteria used to gauge excellence is sure to meet disappointment. The discipline of behavioral sciences teaches us that in order to have stability in a behavior and conduct, the motivation has to be internal. No amount of external resources of carrot and stick motivators could compel people to publish or create science worth mentioning in the International forums.

We suggest that in order to promote health of the nation, research culture is to be promoted by reshaping the strategies. The conjoint training in research and clinical discipline right from under-graduate level, is the only way forward, since lack of awareness and interest at this very early level⁵, strengthens with time and cannot be compensated. A dedicated team of scientists trained in research and clinical practice could drive the research agenda in Pakistan. The role played by role models and supervisors cannot be over emphasized. The research mentorship is critical to development of new breed of researchers. The experience of working as astute researcher, managing projects and grants is an invigorating experience. We have to settle our priorities for the quality research along with appropriate funding and guidance rather than dip our self just fulfilling the criteria of research papers for promotions may be without any benefit to country and our health delivery system.

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