

MY PERSPECTIVE ON HOW RESIDENT DOCTORS CAN BUILD THEIR RESEARCH AND PUBLISHING SKILLS

The residency training programme has research as one of its three prongs, others are services and training. Resident doctor must apply self-directed, practice-based learning and get involved with research alongside rendering clinical services. Research is essential because medicine is an evidence-based science, and the delivery of effective healthcare needs the evidence that is gained from research. Most residents end up not having any publication by the end of their training. Meanwhile, acquiring knowledge in publishing scientific papers will not only help the resident to pass examinations but it adds a lot of values to the resident doctor after passing. The number of publications in your curriculum vitae will also enhance the prospects of getting some jobs. Conducting a very good research depends on skills. The skills of research and scientific writing take time to acquire, and the expected outcome may not be realised immediately. It will be more difficult to learn later if writing scientific papers is not learnt during a structured training like the residency programme. This indicates that the earlier you initiate learning the skills the faster you are likely to acquire the rudiments of scientific writing and publishing.

One must be interested in building up basic skills. You can do this within the first three years of the residency training by taking advantage of the opportunities around like workshops on Clinical Epidemiology and Operation Research course of the Department of Community Medicine, manuscript writing and scientific writing workshop of the Department of Epidemiology and Medical Statistics among others.

You need also to get yourself aligned with someone that has the kind of expertise that you need. Getting someone who is accommodating may be challenging. The person may be your consultant, a senior registrar or a co-registrar. My first conference presentation was during the first year of my residency training. The data I used was from an outreach resident doctors in my department were invited to. Initially, it was a difficult task but I was happy for being part of it.

Passion to learn is not adequate in itself, establishing a good relationship with consultants and co-residents is also necessary. You need to participate actively in journal club, critical appraisal and other research activities going on in your department. The more people you share ideas with the more knowledge you gain.

Opportunity for academic degree pursuits like a master's programme should be maximised. A good master's programme should give basic expertise

required for research activities. Pursuit of academic qualification during residency is a pursuit of excellence. It is obvious from the trend of events now that for appointment into a lecturing post in the University, academic qualification and scholarly publications will become prerequisite and residents with interest in these areas should not be caught off-guard.

The hospital can incorporate a foundation programme for all new residents that will enhance the development of basic research skills which will then grow with the individual as they progress through the residency training rather than waiting till few months before part II fellowship examination. Research grant if made available to interested residents will also encourage interest in research. Awards for best dissertation in each department are all part of what the hospital can do to encourage residents who have distinguished themselves in writing.

Writing the first paper is the most difficult part of acquiring this skill and many residents' doctors delay writing their first paper until after residency training because it seems hard. You can try a local journal for your first publication as a resident. When you are successful, you can then try an international journal. If you start with an international journal, some of the reviewers' comments may be too much for you to handle and this may be discouraging for some. Do not be discouraged by critical reviews as they are not personally directed at you. They are actually meant to increase the value of the article for science.

Make your first attempt now as delay may be regretted. I look forward to seeing your publication on-line.

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