



Early Exposure of Health Care Students to Clinical Research: A Trend to Look Forward to!

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“Knowledge is of no value, unless you put in to practice”

- Anton Chekov

The world today is fast pacing in to the era of “Evidence based Medicine”. Often, we end up asking ourselves what are the scientific evidences available and the impact of a scientific study on our clinical practice. There seems to be a tsunami of technical advances in the field of Medicine and to make the best out of it, one needs to develop a constructively critical scientific approach from a very early time in his practice. Clinical research is of utmost importance as it not only benefits the researchers but also the Institute, the University and in turn the masses who will be receiving the results from it. It helps the researchers face the dilemmas of choosing a topic, planning it, collection of data, presenting it, analyzing and interpreting the data and then writing a report. All in all, it helps in developing the scientific acumen in an individual and appraising the scientific evidences available to be put in to practice for larger benefits.

Unfortunately, health care research often receives low priority universally and especially in developing countries like India. This could be attributed to low awareness and lack of interest amongst the students regarding clinical research. One cannot deny the fact that it is during the Under graduate course that a student’s scientific personality and priorities are shaped. However, there seems to be little provision of training the Under graduate students in basics of research in most of the countries. It has been observed by many authors in the past that there is low to moderate positive attitude towards the clinical research amongst the medical students [1-4].

Early exposure to clinical research during the Under graduate health care courses may help the students in developing a scientific acumen, critical thinking and practical application of theories in to clinical practice as well as concepts of scientific writing. It will also help them in developing their decision making capacity which is of utmost importance in the clinical scenario.

There are a few potential ways to encourage the health care students in taking up research early in their career:

- Device a training programme or include a module on basic training in research in their Under graduate curricula
- Encourage short term projects amongst the Under graduate students under the guidance of mentors
- Provide resources and incentives for clinical research, both to the students and their mentors at the institutional level
- Make the students aware about programmes like Short Term Studentship (STS) by Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)
- Make a short-term project compulsory for the completion of internship during the Under graduate course
- Organizing Under graduate conferences for presentation of these research projects at the institutional level.

There is no denial that there would be certain obstacles and hurdles in implementing this early exposure of Under graduate students to clinical research; such as lack of resources in terms of feasibility and availability of mentors, infrastructure etc. However, achieving this would ultimately prove to be a great service to the field of Medicine. Catching them young to invoke a scientific temperament in the young minds shall give them a life-long sense of curiosity and scientific temperament, and probably that is where we are lacking presently.

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