

Comment on Safa Pervaiz Vasir et al. (J Pak Med Assoc. 68: 327-8, 2018)**Beyond Publish or Perish: Promoting quality and increasing standards in medical research and writing**Sami Ullah,¹ Dilshad Hunain Al Arabia,² Sahibzada Nasir Mansoor,³ Farooq Azam Rathore⁴

Madam, we have read with interest, "Publish or Perish: What can reinforce faculty to participate in the scholarly activity?" by Yasir and colleagues.¹ They have aptly mentioned the key motivators and demotivators for research and writing in Pakistan. There is evidence that faculty involved in research are better teachers and professionals.² In Pakistan, biomedical research and writing are generally not promoted as an educational policy and considered an optional activity. Considering the emerging developments and the multiple roles of a medical professional in the 21st century, it is imperative to learn the basic research skills not necessarily as a career path but also to remain abreast with the latest developments, to critically appraise the quality of research and to provide mentorship to the younger colleagues.

Developing a productive research culture has its own challenges and needs serious strategic policies and actions.³ Strong leadership including personal and organizational character are important attributes.^{4,5}

Visualizing research as a means of promotion in career and focus on quantity than quality has undermined its tremendous benefits in Pakistan. This "number-game" trend needs to be addressed as the majority of the Pakistani faculty is involved in a rat race to publish more manuscripts without considering its impact and actual contribution towards science. This requires action by all stakeholders including Pakistan Medical and Dental Council, Higher Education Commission and College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan. We recommend that criteria should be devised which

ranks the quality of the research instead of counting the number of published manuscripts. The criteria can include the number of citations of the manuscript and the impact factor of the journal. In addition, randomized trials and interventional studies can be ranked higher than simple cross-sectional surveys and descriptive studies. There is a need to recognize the value of systematic reviews and meta-analysis which have the highest place in the hierarchy of evidence-based medicine. Currently, review articles have no weight in the PMDC scoring system. Scoring system developed on these parameters should be adopted. The research output ranking of faculty should be displayed on the PMDC or HEC website. This might motivate the faculty to publish meaningful research relevant to local needs.

Training of faculty in research writing is another aspect which needs attention.

Strengthening of existing faculties and encouraging existing researchers can increase research capacity of universities.⁶

Most of the clinical faculty in Pakistan do not find time and resources to enroll in courses at the expense of their professional duties. Since Internet has revolutionized learning in the 21st century, we recommend massive online open access courses (MOOC) like Coursera, Edx, and Future learn for the faculty to enhance their research and writing skills and AuthorAID for mentorship and resource opportunities.

Mentorship and collaboration along with institutional commitment and leadership are key factors in building capacity for educational research.⁷ There is a need to devise a unified research and writing curriculum for the undergraduate in different health care fields in Pakistan to train these future faculty members in the art and science of medical writing.

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