
Publication: An essential step in research

Sir,

The ethical and publication issues presented in *Lung India* over the past few issues have made interesting and informative reading.^[1,2] Those involved in academics and research would not find them alien. Bringing them to light must have initiated at least a few more debates, if not more. I would like to bring into focus another issue related to research and publication.

There is a significant discrepancy between the number of presentations (oral / poster) in the original research made in various medical conferences and those getting published in scientific journals. One cannot help but wonder that annual conferences of various medical associations / medical specialities are flooded with both poster and oral presentations. However, most of these are never printed in a scientific journal, except for the conference abstract book.

Research is essential to carry science forward. However, equally important is dissemination of the research findings. Presentations during scientific meetings do serve this purpose, but to a limited audience. Publication of the study makes it accessible to many more. It is true that not all studies (my own included) would find merit with scientific journals and it might be inappropriate to expect a 100 percent publication rate for all research studies. However, the authors must make publication of their study a priority and integral part of the research process.

The same holds true for the thesis work carried out during residency. Thesis submission is still the most cherished step of the research work carried out during residency. Not many would object to the observation that it is also the final step for many of these studies. Postgraduate thesis is a well-planned, time-intensive activity, carried out over a few years. The amount of hard work and effort that goes into thesis should not sit idle in the departmental and institutional libraries. Rather it should reach the scientific community. The guides / mentors could play a significant role in realizing this goal. Residents, early in their career and preoccupied with the hectic schedule and examination, need the guidance of the guides / mentors beyond thesis submission, to achieve this target.

Additionally a thought must be spared for the quality of research carried out as a postgraduate thesis. It is true that the thesis is meant to be a learning exercise – a stepping stone toward the research world. However, the process could be made more rewarding by enhancing the quality of research carried out. The lack of utmost scientific rigorousness in this exercise is a matter of concern. Use of inadequate sample size (e.g., a choice of the magical figure of 30 many a times), unsound methodology, and use of inappropriate statistical analysis, are some of the prime concerns in this regard. Working within constraints of the logistic factors for a post graduate thesis is indispensable. However, care must be taken to minimise the limitations of the study at the protocol stage itself. Use of a power calculation tool and consultation with a statistician are some of the simple steps that can help improve the quality of such studies.

Yatan Pal Singh Balhara

*Department of Psychiatry and De-addiction,
Lady Hardinge Medical College and Smt. Sucheta
Kriplani Hospital, New Delhi, India.
E-mail: ypsbalhara@gmail.com*

2. Sharma BB, Singh V. Ethics in writing: Learning to stay away from plagiarism and scientific misconduct. Lung India 2011;28:148-50.

REFERENCES

1. Singh V. Can his research become my publication? Lung India [serial online] 2011;28:159-60.

Access this article online	
Quick Response Code: 	Website: www.lungindia.com
	DOI: 10.4103/0970-2113.85752