

Research Paper Writing: An Obligatory Criteria for Promotion in Medical Colleges

Gauchan E

Professor, Department of Pediatrics,
Manipal College of Medical Sciences, Pokhara, Nepal

Research is an integral part of medicine and clinicians working in medical college hospitals are required to be involved in clinical research. Most medical colleges in Nepal now require a certain number of research papers in addition to clinical experience before a faculty is considered for promotion to a higher post. For clinicians who have been working in their respective fields for several years, fulfilling the necessary criteria of years in their field of work is not difficult but writing a research paper is a daunting task to many. As part of the mandatory requirement for completing the master's degree (MD) in medicine, a postgraduate student is required to submit a thesis which he or she does under the supervision of a senior faculty in the department. However, training on research paper writing is not a part of the curriculum. Once MD is completed, after serving for a few years one is supposed to author research publications before one is eligible for the promotion. Most people face difficulties in completing this task. Problems as small as selecting what it is they want to study, to the calculation of sample size to conducting the study are individual challenges of the process. The actual act of writing the research paper is another hurdle. Many people during the process turn to unethical practices such as plagiarizing someone else's work or fabricating data or producing a paper that is an exact copy of a previously done study.

Writing a research paper is a learned art. It takes time, research, and training before an individual can master this art. Several workshops on research paper writing are conducted a few times a year through several bodies such as Nepal Health Research Council and the Nepal Medical Association,

but these are mostly conducted in the capital city, Kathmandu. Researchers based in the capital thus can easily avail the training, if they choose to, but for those researchers based outside the valley, it becomes difficult to leave behind routine work to attend these workshops. There are also options available online where one can take online courses on scientific paper writing but this might not be widely accessible or known to all. Researchers interested in writing a scientific paper should be aware of these options and should try to attend these courses to improve their skills and to produce a good quality paper. Although advancement in technology has made it easier for us to access the internet from almost any corner of the world, it is not quite the same experience as being able to attend these workshops/training physically.

To promote newbie researchers and to have them write a good quality research paper, it would be a great initiative if training are conducted in all provinces, so the interested can enroll in such programs and improve their writing skills. These training or workshops should train a person to start research right from scratch and include courses like how to plan the study, calculate the sample size, how to conduct the study, and finally how to write a good scientific paper and ensure that there is no plagiarism. As medical colleges make research papers writing requisite criteria for promotion, it would be beneficial if they ensured that their newly recruited faculty gets the necessary training when they first join the institute as well, so that it is ultimately beneficial to both parties.