

## PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY POSTGRADUATE TRAINEE DURING DISSERTATION WRITING

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Dissertation is the capstone event for both undergraduate and postgraduate medical education.<sup>1</sup> This is the most challenging and time consuming element during training period but despite this, it is now regarded as a scientific work which deserve attention from the national and international scientific community.<sup>2,3</sup>

The sad state of affair in most of the medical colleges and universities of Pakistan is inadequate teaching of graduates about medical research concept. After completion of their doctorate, majority of them come across fellowship diploma by College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan (CPSP). In addition to developing patient care (including clinical reasoning), medical knowledge, practice-based learning, interpersonal and communication skills, and professionalism; they tangle into norms of medical writing and research as desired by CPSP. This creates a lot of difficulties encountered by trainees following initiation of their training programme, and they search literatures for selection of their research topic. After passing through numerous complexities of medical writing, they finally submit their synopses. A large number of submitted synopses are either rejected or returned with objections by CPSP, making trainees more frustrated which eventually discourages them to undertake any research work. The main reason of rejection is most often choosing common

topics. In addition, the following important points have been noted regarding objections:

1. Incorrect/incomplete rationale of study.
2. Current study protocols not published in last 5 years.
3. Objectives not well-defined.
4. Inappropriate operational definition.
5. More than two variables employed.
6. Insufficient sample size.
7. Incongruous study design.
8. Improper data collection procedure including minimization of bias.
9. Inaccurate statistical analysis.

Medical research and writing in Pakistan is not yet fully developed. Although majority of the reasons mentioned above are the steps in right direction but the main purpose of dissertation writing should be to emphasized on the art of conducting proper research and furnishing its presentation in the form of writing rather than making the trainees afraid of this. Teaching students to write effectively has been a major concern in education for many years.<sup>4</sup> Problems affecting such scientific writing have included variety in terms of scientific level and requirement of the research projects as well as inadequate supervision.<sup>5</sup> As the process of dissertation is time bound phenomenon and infrastructure of medical training institutes of our country is not well-developed in terms of record keeping facilities and follow-up of patients, some of these objections, particularly sample size should be reconsidered by CPSP authorities to encourage postgraduates and promote research culture. However the CPSP Council needs to be commended for having given an option to the postgraduates to publish two scientific papers after getting their

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synopsis approved in the CPSP recognized medical journals instead of writing a Dissertation. To facilitate further, the CPSP has now approved some more journals.<sup>6</sup> The CPSP approved journals are as under:-

1. Journal of College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan.
2. Journal of Pakistan Medical Association (JPMA)
3. Journal of Ayub Medical College, Abbottabad.
4. Pakistan Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences.
5. Pakistan Armed Forces Medical Journal.
6. Infectious Diseases Journal.
7. Pakistan Journal of Medical Research.
8. Journal of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences.
9. Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences.

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