

## IMPORTANCE, RELEVANCE OF LOCAL STUDIES AND NATIONAL, REGIONAL DATABASES

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Whenever one wishes to plan or conduct any study, it is extremely important to know what work has already been done in that particular area and what information is available in the medical literature. An effort should also be made to find out what gaps exist in the available information so that it can be addressed in the proposed study. However, one of the important mistakes which most of the authors in the less developed world make is they just look at the Medline or PubMed for references, despite the fact that it covers a few journals published from the developing world.<sup>1</sup> Hence, often it is not possible to find any information about most of the problems which are confronted by the clinicians and research scientists in this part of the world.

Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE) or ISI/Thompson more commonly known for Impact Factor is an important database. At present it covers 7631 biomedical journals which too contains fewer than 2% of journals published from the developing countries.<sup>2,3</sup> It is therefore imperative for the investigators and research scientists in the less developed countries to search the other databases in their own countries and the region. This is more relevant considering the fact that the pathology and the disease pattern are similar. During the last two decades a number of local and regional databases and other sources of information have

become available and many of them offer free access on the internet. Before writing, the authors in these countries must visit these databases to collect relevant information. They may be surprised to find studies on the subject which they thought had not been researched and they may be the first one to address the issue. A lot of good work may be found in these local and regional databases which at times is missing in Medline, PubMed or SCIE ISI/Thompson Web of Sciences. Reference to local and regional studies also improves the chances of acceptance of the manuscript as this convinces the Editors that the authors have had adequate literature search before planning, conducting the study and writing the final manuscript.

Some of these databases and sources of information are as under:

### **National Database:**

*Pakmedinet:* This is Pakistan's largest medical information Gateway. It covers all biomedical journals published from Pakistan since 1997. It provides abstracts but more recently they have also provided facilities of full text link at publisher's website.<sup>4</sup> If need be, one can also visit websites of various Pakistani biomedical journals which also offer free access on the net.

*Index of Dissertations:* College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan has published two books containing specialty wise index of dissertation by its Fellows. One of the books has details of dissertation from 1967 – 2000 while the second book covers the period from 2001 – 2003.<sup>5</sup> It is another rich source of local studies. No scientific paper has been published from many of these dissertations hence this research is not covered by any database and this academic treasure remain hidden.

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### Regional Databases:

*Google Scholar*: This provides a much simpler way to search scholarly literature. Since it covers almost all the important sources which includes peer reviewed journals, thesis, books, abstracts etc., many of the studies from the developing countries which are often not covered by Medline, can be found here.<sup>6</sup>

*IMEMR Current Contents*: This represents Index Medicus for the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. It is published by WHO EMRO and also offers free access on the net. This database covers 392 biomedical journals published from the WHO EMRO region. This is now also being linked to Medline.<sup>7</sup>

*EMBASE/Excerpta Medica*: This is yet another very important database which covers over five thousand biomedical journals from seventy countries. Many of the journals covered in this database from the developing countries are not included in either Medline or PubMed Central. Hence, it is a very useful source of references to regional studies.<sup>8</sup>

*Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)*: This covers 3680 biomedical journals and 1261 journals searchable at article level. It offers access to free, full text, quality control journals.<sup>9</sup>

*EMRmedex*: This is another recently introduced Iran based database which covers 195 biomedical journals published from 16 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region database.<sup>10</sup>

*medIND*: This database covers 40 biomedical journals from India. It provides full text of manuscripts published in these journals.<sup>11</sup>

*Medknow Publications*: This is another Indian based database which covers seventy two Indian biomedical journals including numerous journals from overseas. This database provides free access to full text of the manuscripts.<sup>12</sup>

*Bioline International*: It is a not for profit electronic publishing service which provides open access to quality research journals published from developing countries.<sup>13</sup>

In view of the above large number of local and regional databases which offer free access on the net, there can be no excuse by the authors not to refer to local and regional studies. It just requires a serious effort and commitment.

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