EDITORIAL

Research Publications In Psychiatry:
A Daunting Task For Everyone

Hatta S

Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia,
56000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Over the years, it was noted that there was an urgent need for research publications for every Malaysian Psychiatrist. In academia, the pressure was mounting on every psychiatrist to excel in terms of their key performance indicator (KPI). The research university status of the university demanded all publications to be covered at least by the Scopus and ISI databases. Publications in quartile level journals were sought by every university. The need for publications is great, especially in academia in order to get promoted and develop one’s career. At least, this urgency was not meant for clinicians serving under Malaysian Ministry of Health (MOH) but the scenario may change in near future. The entire exercise has posed a great challenge to the psychiatrist, and it is presumed that a situation may arise when the psychiatrist may himself or herself face a stressful situation and “burnt-out” situation and succumb to significant mental health problems. A balance has to be struck between our core business in teaching and clinical service in academia, and between clinical service and administrative workload in MOH.

In many instances, even though many manuscripts were sent to high impact factor journals in the West, they were shot down for no or some reasons. Sometimes, the common reasons for rejections were mentioned as poor English, no new scientific facts to highlight, lack in depth of the study, etc. Many authors wandered aimlessly as they did not know where to send their manuscript for the next option once their initial submission was rejected by a particular journal.

There is a drive for publishing in high impact factor journals. Impact factor itself is a debatable thing. Even the discoverers of impact factor and ‘H index’ would never have imagined that one day these things would be used as a yardstick to measure the ranking of universities. The main worry is the small number of Malaysian journals being indexed in Scopus or ISI. Inability to fulfil the stringent criteria had resulted in many journals being turned down when they applied for indexation in Scopus or ISI. The role of open-access journal was noted to be rather unimportant, despite of being cheap and easily accessible. It is a sorry state to see not a single agency or authority being involved in helping an editor for his quest for indexation. The fact that some of the nations have their own indexed journals and tend to publish work from their region cannot be refuted. The role of PLoS journal as a peer-reviewed scientific journal that will be freely available and reportedly capable of competing with such prominent publications as Science, Nature, and Cell is an exciting idea and may reduce the monopoly of existing publishers.
Nevertheless, why do we have to look constantly to our colleagues in the West? Why can’t we be self-sufficient? How long do we have to wait to stand on our own feet to get our work published? No one weighs these facts.

Research is like keeping an ‘elephant.’ If you keep an elephant, then you have to feed and take care of the elephant in terms of manpower, or else the elephant will suffer. One has to have adequate manpower, good support staff, well trained post doctoral fellows, substantial financial back up, strong linkage with Western researchers and editors, and enough time to dedicate for research and do the writing. A closer look at all the premier research institutes depict that they have a sound post doctoral team which do the majority of research and article writing. There is an urgent need to hire more sophisticated experts in the field of research rather than tighten the noose on the local researchers. Results in terms of publication cannot be shown overnight rather one has to wait for years to weigh the research output. A culture has to be set in and maintained where everyone would strive hard for excellence rather than few individuals leading the research and publications. The editors are unable to perform because of too many administrative and clinical duties in their own institutions. An editor can only excel when he or she can devote her full time to run a journal without distraction. The editor has also compromised with mere supporting staff and faced severe financial constraints but still then, they manage to keep the journal running smoothly.

The main question of the day is “Are the psychiatrists really in the underperforming category?” I will not take any interest in defending them but I would surely focus and give my opinion to make the conditions more favourable for him/her so that he or she could excel without facing any problem. All areas need to be addressed properly. Psychiatrists deal with individuals who are mentally stressed and the day is not far when the psychiatrists themselves may find themselves on the “wrong side of the boat”. The talent has to be nurtured carefully and good leaders are needed to pave the way for attaining stupendous success in the field of research. “Where there is a will, there is a way.” Hence, if we have the will power, we can surely excel but we need to take out all the hurdles which hamper us from reaching the zenith of success in research. Let us develop the bond of collaborative research and plan our action judiciously. Consider this article an invitation to encourage a passion for research and publications and I am sure our goals to be the top ranked research nations of the world will be a success.

**References**

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**Corresponding Author**
Professor Dr Hatta Sidi
Consultant of Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry
Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
56000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
**Email:** hattasidi@hotmail.com