LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Response to Research Publications in Psychiatry: A Daunting Task for Everyone

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The author raises valuable points in his editorial\textsuperscript{1}. The need to publish is more urgent compared to before. There also appears to be a “fixation” with rankings by the local institutions resulting for the need of all academics in institutions for higher learning to play their part as the author highlighted\textsuperscript{2}. However as the author relates, in this drive for us to assist our various institutions to perform in the body or literature worldwide there is also an obligation for us to assist our local academic platforms which include journals produced by our local institution or organizations like the Malaysian Journal of Psychiatry (MJP). This dilemma of shunning local publications for international ones is not new but appears to be more pronounced within the last two to three years. This does not augur well in building local capabilities nor does it do any good in providing confidence.

In many instances this body of work drives local policies and highlights local issues that may be of much interest nationally but not internationally. An example of this can be seen in New Zealand through the New Zealand Medical Journal (NZMJ) which often times publishes articles with local concerns. These are articles create debate within the audience which is then pushed across to society and thus drives individuals to instigate appropriate policies through this information. Two examples of this that come to mind are smoking\textsuperscript{3} and alcohol\textsuperscript{4} for which both have had review committees set up in local government to discuss this further. A newer issue that is creating similar interest and debate is food addiction\textsuperscript{5}. There is no reason that this will not work in Malaysia.

The author also mentioned regarding limitations faced by local researchers such as funding, language, support and scientific content. I concur with the author on this and strongly feel that the MJP is one venue where these limitations can be addressed. The author also poses a question “are psychiatrists in the underperforming category?” to which my response is – No!. Looking through the MJP since 2002, there is an increase in publication overall with many new authors. Trainees are encouraged to publish and with the addition of abstracts from the local congress, more writings have been observed. However with 200 plus psychiatrists locally where a third are early career psychiatrists, there is only positives that publications will grow in the near future.

Considering that our numbers as a speciality is small, one way to increase publications and overcome limitations highlighted is through collaboration. These could be intra-collaboration between different disciplines...
within departments, faculties or universities or inter-collaborations. Some of these issues are being addressed by the respective universities and the association itself.

Perhaps we psychiatrists should take this special reminder from the author as a “wake up call”. A special mention to the author for reminding us on the need to support our local publications and to those who are responsible in ensuring it’s success.

References


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