

GUEST EDITORIAL

RESEARCH IN THE FIELDS OF DENTISTRY

“What is Research?” rather than delving into dictionaries or googling it, let us focus on the essence of the word. Research can be broken down into its constituent words, Re and Search, Re meaning to do over and over again, and Search refers to the quest to find answers to innumerable questions like the way the Universe exists, How the body functions, How to cure the incurable and most importantly how to remain healthy in an increasingly unhealthy world. These constituent words complement each other perfectly, the quest for answers is everlasting, and today’s breakthrough is common knowledge of tomorrow. Hence it may be defined as, “Creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications.” Research prevents us from resting on our laurels and saves us from sinking into the depths of mediocrity. To continuously question what we believe and suggest and what may be the reason of a phenomenon allows all researchers, dental and otherwise, to seek and one day possibly achieve our Eureka moment !

A comprehensive analysis of 1274 articles published in the top two American sociology journals between 1935 and 2005 found that roughly two thirds of these articles used quantitative methods. Quantitative research refers to the systematic empirical investigation of quantitative properties and phenomena and their relationships. The objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and/or hypotheses pertaining to phenomena. The process of measurement is central to quantitative research because it provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relationships. Quantitative research is used widely in social sciences. Qualitative methods produce information only on the particular cases studied, and any more general conclusions are only hypotheses. Although a distinction is commonly drawn between qualitative and quantitative aspects of scientific investigation, it can be safely asserted that the two go hand in hand. Based on analysis of the history of science, Kuhn concludes, “Large amounts of qualitative work have usually been prerequisite to fruitful quantification in the physical sciences”. Qualitative research is often used to gain a general sense of phenomena and to form theories that can be tested using further quantitative research. Dentistry is a fertile field and requires both quantitative and qualitative research.

At one time, Dentistry was shunned and ridiculed; now it is quite rightly poised to stand shoulder to shoulder with the medical profession. New fields such as Forensic odontology, Lasers, Mini implants are slowly developing into full specialization avenues. As new treatment options emerge such as painless dentistry, single visit crowns and saliva tests to diagnose cancer and diabetes, research must play its role to ascertain whether new is better or old is gold. Exciting possibilities daunt the researchers to conduct work in many new hitherto undiscovered fields in dentistry.

True to the dictum, ‘publish or perish’ the research of today may perish if there is no medium for its dissemination. Research symposia, conferences provide good forums but medical journals confer immortality and international visibility. The articles in a journal scrutinize the past, redefine the present and shape the future. For that I tip my hat to JKCD and its editorial board for doing exactly that for the dental profession in not only Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but for the whole of Pakistan and for the whole world in the coming future. As my parting note, let me reiterate that Dentistry is not dissimilar to other avenues of science in any respect. For dentistry to succeed, it must evolve, with the help of researchers, into a newer, better and more efficient breed of species to survive in the jungle that is the 21st century.

Prof. Mohammed Hafizullah
Vice Chancellor
Khyber Medical University
Peshawar