Research in dentistry: The road less traveled

No invention could have been possible had the human brain been without the natural instinct of exploration, scrutiny, and search analysis. This human impulse has urged and led man to dig out probabilities of achieving excellence, through research and development. Eminent academicians and educationists have laid emphasis on research for better career progression and growth. In order to stand abreast with the challenges of modern times, research can play an important role in strengthening our development. Scientists have made amazing contributions to the advancement of science and technology in our country.

The scientific fraternity in India has contributed tremendously in the advancement of science and technology, influencing every aspect of human life. In the year 1958, the Indian Parliament passed the Scientific Research Bill in the Pure, Applied, and Educational Field. After attaining remarkable success in the Green Revolution, scientific research got excellent cognizance and boost. Since then, tremendous research has been carried out in Agriculture as well as Animal Husbandry, which has helped to increase crop production as well as Dairy Development. The field of medical research too has achieved marvelous success in controlling communicable diseases. In 2011, no new Polio case has been detected. This has been possible due to the excellent strategies of medical professionals. Also, a plethora of research is being carried out on HIV / AIDS and other preventable diseases. Cancer research has been given the top most and overriding priority, to minimize its occurrence.

The Dental and Oral Health Research scenario is in contrast to the Medical stream, as limited research is being carried out in dentistry. Whatever little research is undertaken is carried out by postgraduate scholars, it being a mandatory part of their study course. In spite of 293 dental institutions in the country, limited interest in research activities of oral / dental health is exhibited by the professionals. There are very few articles with a citation index and an impact factor, as compared to the medical field. The science of Medicine / Dentistry and the art of healing go hand in hand, complementing each other. It is the moral responsibility of Health / Oral Health professionals to keep both facets properly balanced. Hence, senior faculty members have to be careful that research and patient care go side-by-side.

Certainly dentistry is at the stage of growth and development, wherein, a research paradigm must be established, so that the research is properly conducted. Creditable studies must be undertaken and their results must be verified, to validate their use for the well being of humans. If we do not pay due attention to the aspect of research in dentistry, the future of this branch will be dismal and directionless.

In fact research helps to build respect and credibility to the profession that needs to achieve national licensing, as research improves the academic excellence. If research is conducted with proper norms, keeping in view the ethical consideration, and without bias, dentistry can reach amazing heights of recognition and acclamation. This will further boost and identify extraordinary hidden talents. The quantity and quality of research in India has been on the decline due to non-enforcement of ethical and principled procedures and guidelines. If we are anxious to achieve marvels and novelties in dentistry like any other stream of education the system of Research and Development must be effective and reality-based, which is missing at the moment. Thus, there is a great need to give major impetus to research and development in oral health and dentistry.

The dynamic process of change clearly affects nearly all aspects of the dental professional, in dental education and dental research. Dental publications are not an exception. When we compare them with those of the past, we will realize that the number of publications has increased tremendously and the standard and quality has improved considerably. Expectations from dental journals have increased because of the introduction of new concepts such as the impact factors. Unless and until research is made compulsory and mandatory it is difficult, rather, impossible, to achieve success in our aims and objectives of leading dentistry at a global level.

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