

Getting bit by the research bug: Why medical students should get published.

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As a final year medical student in the midst of applying for further training after graduation, I find myself simultaneously grateful to have lines beneath the 'Research & Publications' heading of my CV and proud of the work that I have produced and published. While publication is certainly an effective means of career advancement, I feel the benefits of participating in research as a medical student extend far beyond CV development. As medical students, we are often encouraged by academic staff to publish scientific literature, but we are rarely instilled with the value of conducting this research and the potential impact of our work.

At the forefront, the underlying currency of medicine is knowledge. As clinicians, how we trade this knowledge is through research and its final product, scientific publication. We gain knowledge from the work of others and use this information to guide how we care for our patients every day. My enthusiasm for research lies in the opportunity to add a small brick to the wealth of information that forms the foundation of medical practice and drives changes in patient care. Active involvement of medical undergraduates in research is essential to prepare the next generation of scientifically-oriented physicians. My goal as Editor-in-Chief of the Trinity Medical Student Journal (TSMJ) is to cultivate an environment that supports student research, encourages scientific literacy, and fosters a culture of evidence-based medicine.

The publication of a medical article requires much more than just writing an article. Writing case reports entails finding an interesting case, doing a literature search, collating medical information, choosing a journal and writing up an interesting case and responding to reviewers' comments. Writing audits or research reports requires involvement in study design, data collection, analysis and interpretation, as well as drafting and editing the full article. By the time an individual has gone through these steps, they will have undoubtedly

enhanced their understanding of their particular topic. Completing a project from inception to publication develops a sound understanding of research methodology and critical thinking skills, but also patience, humility and determination. While students may not be considering research careers, they will certainly develop an appreciation of the value and limitations of medical research, as well as the skills to critically evaluate evidence and apply it to their clinical practice.

Part of the beauty of medicine as a career path is the concept of lifelong learning. By prioritizing research alongside their medical education, students have the unique opportunity to receive mentorship from senior physicians. Lifelong learning to me also implies lifelong teaching; all members of the medical field have plenty to learn from each other—even medical students can teach their peers and seniors. Publications provide medical students a valuable opportunity to share their knowledge.

At this early stage in your careers, may you all be bitten by the "research bug" and seek out research experience as an undergraduate medical student. Internalize the spirit of enquiry: ask questions, critically appraise the literature, seek out the answers, and find mentors in your chosen field. It is my hope that by providing opportunities for students to engage in the publication process, I am instilling passion in future physicians to use it for meaningful advancement of their own careers, and also of the profession as a whole.