

Guest Editorial

GOOD RESEARCH BEGINS IN THE DAYS OF POSTGRADUATE TRAINING!

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In our country, the culture of good quality research in all subjects, whether at the level of postgraduate thesis, initiative from faculties, or intramural and extramural projects, has been prevalent at Institutes of National Importance (INI) over the last few decades. These efforts also led to publications in national and international journals of repute. This applies to all subjects, including psychiatry. However, non-INI institutes cut a sorry figure in this area for various reasons, including a greater priority on clinical and administrative work, poor orientation and training in research methodology, less time for supervision, and more time devoted to private practice.¹ The lion's share of manuscripts that are submitted to journals from these institutes is derived from postgraduate theses, and this is often the root cause of poor-quality research. A postgraduate trainee is practically a novice in research methodology and is forced to go by the protocol thrust upon him by the faculty or seniors, many of whom are not properly trained in research. Despite the sincere efforts of the trainees, the basic methodological shortcomings of these papers can never be overcome, no matter how sincerely the rest of the paper is executed. Oftentimes, the topics chosen for theses lack novelty and are repetitive in nature. As a result, papers derived from them are often rejected by high-quality journals and either

remain unpublished or end up in predatory journals. While training and updating of faculties, research training of post graduate trainees, interdepartmental collaboration and several other measures have been suggested as long-term remedial measures to improve postgraduate research, one of the measures which could be immediate and lead to quick results could be creating a repository of thesis topics along with a brief outline of suggested methodology keeping the time and other resource constraints in mind. An initiative in this direction has already been taken by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Medical Shodhganga² is an online repository of postgraduate theses on all subjects, including psychiatry. There are 98 topics available in psychiatry in total. Although this initiative is laudable, many issues need to be addressed. The number of postgraduate seats in the country exceeds one thousand, and considering this, the number of topics is grossly inadequate. Moreover, the website only lists the topics and does not delve into the methodological issues, including sample size, population, duration, and many other facets, which can lead to a gulf of difference in the quality of research carried out on the same topic. The Indian Psychiatric Society (IPS) can take a landmark initiative in this regard. The IPS can rope in clinical researchers from various states and regions of the country and

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create a pool of research topics in psychiatry, keeping the common resource constraints of postgraduate training in mind. Unlike Medical Shodhganga, the topics should be followed by a brief outline of the suggested methodology, which will be sound and at the same time feasible to carry out during the training period. Once an online repository is created, topics can be added to it over time based on relevance, novelty, and other factors. Involving faculty from across the country will not only take care of the knowledge gap but also lead to topics that will be mindful of varying resources in institutes across the country, and try to address research gaps wherever possible. It would also be a good idea to keep a team of accomplished researchers to review the submissions and suggest necessary changes to bring the topics and methodology closer to perfection. This effort will involve the utilization of available resources and will not require any extra funds or administrative

sanction. The repository can be created over the course of months.

The dearth of high-quality research is often evident at the very point of inception, and creating a pool of topics would go a long way toward plugging this loophole. Over the years, this has a strong possibility of creating a cascading effect on psychiatry research in the country!

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