Editorial

Collaborative Research: The Core of Excellence in Clinical Physiology

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Research is the core component of physiology, and it provides distinction and dignity to the subject. For clinical physiology as the subject to be distinguished, and medical physiologists to be renowned in the medical fraternity, research has to be promoted in all clinical physiology laboratories across the country. Collaborative research is a strong via media to connect clinical physiologists and clinical/diagnostic physiology laboratories and to facilitate research output in Clinical Physiology. Research conducted by more than one researcher or research team, either within their institute or with colleagues from other institutions towards a common goal contributes to collaborative research. It is different from a multi-centric study which is usually a trial that follows a single protocol but conducted at more than one place and consequently by more than one investigator.

Collaborative research is defined as research involving coordination between researchers, institutions, organizations, and communities. This cooperation can bring distinct expertise to a project towards a common goal. Why do we need collaboration in Research? Because it provides: a) Encouragement of funding resources, b) Exchange of learning abilities, c) Command on expanded capacity, d) Distribution of Labour, e) Collegiality involvement, f) Sharing of resources and g) Risk management. The Benefits of collaboration in research are: i) Addressing several challenges simultaneously, ii) Solutions to complex health, health system and cultural-sensitive questions, iii) Sharing of resources and technical expertise, iv) Capacity and skill enhancement in all parts of country, iv) Increase the funding possibilities and v) Advocacy and translation.[1]

The main objective of collaborative research should be for developing novel treatment protocols/ diagnostic protocols through research. This can include the collaboration of basic research, applied research and clinical research. However, the issues concerned in collaborative research are that the primary focus should be on evidence-based research, inter-disciplinary involvement, contribution to central funding of the project, enhancement of the scope for wider data collection, and to make it translational research. Nevertheless, the promises of collaborative research are outcome-based research, developing new treatment protocols or diagnostic protocols and establishing centre of excellence.

The challenges in collaborative research are identifying research priorities, defining research questions, accessing proper and adequate scientific literature, critical appraisal of analysis and application and audit of research quality. Other challenges include defining of the sectors and relative stakeholders, difficulties in the coordination among the stakeholders, causes of inter-sectoral interventions, communication between different stakeholders among different sectors, and how to translate research findings into knowledge that is useable for different sectors. Finally, the collaborative research should aim at translational research, which is basic the principle of physiology "Bench to Bedside".

A mentor–mentee relationship is very crucial as the challenges experienced by the mentor will be faced by the mentees and it will be the duty of the current scientists to mentor the next generation of scientists. The mentor is responsible for holding regular meetings with mentees and to make sure that they are familiar with academic and non-academic policies. Miscommunications can also be caused by working among different research disciplines and can be due to different understandings about science, vocabulary, or methods. Each and every working researcher has their own perspective of working, for example, some prefer verbal agreements, and some consider written contracts. On the other hand, few are in favour of publishing every new finding and others prefer a single large publication after compilation of whole data.[1]

Collaboration in research encourages the establishment of effective communication and partnerships and offers equal opportunities among the team members.[2] It honours and respects each member's individual and organizational style. Collaboration also increases the ethical conduct of maintaining honesty, integrity, justice, transparency, and confidentiality. Establishing clinical physiology as a vibrant subject in medicine, more collaboration in research is needed in translational physiology. Collaborative research is the need of hour for clinical physiologists of the country.

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