

Introduction to research for international young academics, Radiological Society of North America scientific assembly and annual meeting, 2019, Chicago: Our experience

Dear Sir,

“Publish or perish” – a phrase that every academician gets to hear not once, not twice but innumerable number of times. In this day and age, the numbers of publications are gauged as a marker of professional efficiency and are a decisive factor for recruitment and promotions in an academic setup. In this exasperating and taxing rat race, the true essence of medical research to benefit the patient, physician and community at large is lost. Radiological Society of North America (RSNA) organizes Introduction to Research for International Young Academics (IRIYA) workshop every year to encourage young radiologists from all across the globe to pursue careers in academic radiology. In 2019, we both were two of the 16 candidates selected worldwide for this training program. We wish to share our wonderful learning experience during this training program, spread awareness about the fundamentals of ethical research, encourage young academicians to apply and benefit from this excellent program and dive into the field of academic radiology.

At the outset, we would like to thank our mentors and our respective institutions for nominating us for this program. The program is aimed for residents or fellows currently in radiology training or radiologists no more than two years out of training and beginning or considering an academic career. It is held at McCormick Place, Chicago during the time of annual meeting of Radiological Society of North America and spans over 5 days.

The program starts with welcome reception wherein all the participants get to meet and interact with each other and the program organizers and mentors. Various aspects of clinical research including designing and planning a clinical research, oral presentation of clinical research, preparing an original research paper, research ethics, clinical effectiveness, and outcomes, conducting clinical research, statistics, quality, and safety research were dealt with in great detail by renowned and esteemed academicians in the field of radiology. This was accompanied by multiple research workshops wherein each participant was given a chance to present an overview of ongoing/future research project which was commented

upon and constructively critiqued by an insightful panel of experts comprising of Johan G. Blickman, Stephan D. Voss, Alexander A. Bankier, Musturay Karcaaltincaba, Ruth Carlos, and Jean-Pierre Tasu. Also, there was a workshop and interactive session on “designing a research question” wherein the IRIYA participants along with participants of introduction to academic radiology (ITAR – similar program only for North American radiology residents) were randomly grouped and asked to develop a research question which was then discussed by two revered panellists (John Eng and Richard D. Hichwa). An interactive session titled “Ask the editors” helped us in learning the trade and craft from the leaders in radiology research which included Editor in chief and senior editors of renowned radiology journals including Radiology, Applied radiology and Journal of the American College of radiology.

Young radiologists, us included, consider research synonymous to something novel, experimental or ground breaking. However, the faculty stressed that research is simply asking a question and doing something to answer it. Usually, the main focus is on doing something whilst the fundamental step should be to develop a research question. The elements of a good question, types of bias including selection bias and pitfalls were discussed extensively.

In our country, in spite of having many brilliant minds with great potential, research is usually lagging as resources and funding for healthcare and research is limited. We cannot resist sharing the elements of “effort” expressed by Alexander A. Bankier which were: (1) never underestimate the importance of local issues and problems which may have implications far beyond imagination and may be extrapolated to apply on a global level, (2) never underestimate the importance of local context and relevance of local tools so as to use them to the best of abilities, (3) not to be afraid of writing and publicizing our thoughts, ideas and findings as what is unpublished does not exist.

Most of the young radiologists who are just starting their academic career are not very familiar with statistics and

heavily depend on statisticians for the same. However, basic knowledge of statistics is imperative as statistical analysis should be prospectively planned in every research. There were two phenomenal sessions on statistics during the program which made the subject simpler, more relevant and easily applicable.

An important learning experience was about the ethical issues pertaining to clinical research especially in the current era of artificial intelligence. The relevance of informed consent, institutional review board approval and publication ethics were discussed. Dubious research practices such as ghost/gift authorship, fabricated data, duplicate publication and plagiarism were taken up in detail and advised to absolutely refrain from.

In conclusion, every research work should focus on its clinical impact, utility and practical applications so as to benefit the patient, physician and community at large. Thus the question, “what is best for the patient?” should be the elemental component of every research. All in all, IRIYA 2019 was a very well curated wholesome program and we would encourage all fellow young radiologists to apply for the same and further strengthen the radiology research in their institutes and country.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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