

Editorial

What Kind of Research Does Pakistan Need?

The above question has been a source of concern to many of us working in teaching institutions and involved in research activities. Those of us who have had experience of working in teaching and research positions in advanced western countries, hopefully, have a greater perspective and perhaps a greater depth of vision. However, it is possible to be so over-awed by the dazzle of a successful and dominating system and society that one may try to mimic and imitate that system without giving a thought as to the relevance of such activities in a third world country like Pakistan.

Research in modern medicine is not meant to come up with great new discoveries. Clinical research is a method to scientifically answer questions posed by the researcher and executed by either prospectively collecting relevant data or looking retrospectively at data already available and attempts to consolidate known knowledge or uncover unknown associations. Basic medical research is more fundamental and exciting and is more likely to uncover new phenomenon and lead to newer discoveries.

With increasing sophistication in instrumentation and increasing cost of research, it is becoming less and less likely that a genius sitting in a poorly equipped, poorly staffed laboratory with no budget will come up with great discoveries. So, we have to rely entirely on the advanced countries for all advances in basic research and any such research conducted locally is but a formal requirement to rubber-stamp M.Sc., or Ph.D., degrees. Even the tools required for modern clinical research seem to be slowly getting beyond our reach and no really new advances can be expected to occur in our setting.

As a developing country, we first have to sit down and organize our priorities and see where medical research fits. Then we have to see what type of research needs be done. It may be that the only type of research presently needed is simply to know what diseases exist in what proportion of our population, and secondly, of all diagnostic modalities and treatments available over the world, what is appropriate and cost - effective in our setting.