

EDITOR'S NOTE

The *p* word in publication

Most of the papers in medical journals are written by academics. The reasons for this is obvious, they conducted lots more research and the medical journal is an important medium for them to disseminate their scientific findings. Equally obvious, but less likely to be mentioned, is that the academics crave for "promotion, prosperity, prestige, and posterity".¹

The *Malaysian Family Physician*, even though its stated aim is to serve the educational needs of family physicians, hardly publishes any papers written by practicing family doctors in the community. As the Editor since 2006, I received few submissions from this latter group. Perhaps our colleagues in the community don't care much for the *p* words mentioned above. However, quite often my colleagues "out there" tell about their interesting cases, most of them can and should grace the pages of this journal.

Documenting the wisdom of clinical practice has a relatively weak tradition in family medicine. As a profession, we need to collectively work to overcome our inertia in this aspect. The great clinician and medical writer, William Osler, had observed this:

"There is no more difficult art to acquire than the art of observation, and for some men it is quite as difficult to record an observation in brief and plain language."

For many novice medical writers, there is probably some fear in putting their thoughts on paper (*"what if I proved to be wrong?"*). Not to worry, William Osler, advised:

"No human being is constituted to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and even the best of men must be content with fragments, with partial glimpses, never the full fruition."

"Observe, record, tabulate, communicate. Use your five senses. Learn to see, learn to hear, learn to feel, learn to smell, and know that by practice alone you can become expert."

Reference

1. Teng CL. Games Academics Play. A case study of what is and isn't publishable. 15th FMSA Conference, 25th June 2011. Invited lecture.

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