Editorial

Inculcating the habit of scientific writing among medical professionals

Accurate documentation of noteworthy observations and archiving them are two attributes that all medical professionals expected to acquire. With available resources then, our ancient clinicians have achieved this to perfection. Same, however, cannot be said about the current medical professionals. Nevertheless, scientific writing is considered a necessary skill of medical professionals and academics.

Scientific writing is not a component of undergraduate curriculum but the subject gets addressed, although not in a systematic way, during the postgraduate training. Some make an extra effort to improve the skill and enjoy medical writing.

Scientific writing has been made easy by numerous guidelines that have been developed in the recent past. The well known CONSORT guidelines in reporting clinical trials (www.consort-statement.org), STROBE guidelines for observational studies (www.strobe-statement.org) and QUOROM guidelines for meta-analysis, have made reporting more uniform and comprehensive.

Most of the journals including GMJ insist on the IMRaD format, the well accepted method of medical writing, when submitting scientific research. Section on Introduction followed by Methods, Results and Discussion are the essential components of a research article. Simply they question “why you did?” in the Introduction, “what you did?” in the Methods, “what did you find?” under Results and “what does all that mean?” in the Discussion section. However authors have the freedom to include subsections such as Statistical analysis and Conclusions to improve the presentation. Sufficient details on the experimental design and method of analysis are needed to permit anyone wishing to reproduce the experiment and its analysis.

It is only rarely that research done in developing countries like Sri Lanka would change the current medical practice. However it may change the traditional thinking pattern and allow us to look at an issue in a different way. We hope that some of the research findings published in this journal will generate new ideas, stimulate a discussion and, more importantly, encourage others to write scientifically.