

Editorial**Need for Research Momentum in Allied Health Professionals****Misbah Marryam¹**Benazir Bhutto Hospital, Rawalpindi,¹

In the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, Allied Health Professionals play a pivotal role in patient care, rehabilitation, and overall wellness. These services constitute a foundational pillar of healthcare systems worldwide, comprising approximately one-third of the global health workforce including a wide range of healthcare disciplines like physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, podiatry, psychology, dietetics, pharmacy, prosthetics, orthotics, orthoptics, radiology and exercise physiology, etc. They not only manage patients with different impairments and disabilities at different levels but also play a major role in filling the gap between different professions by fostering a multi-disciplinary team approach.¹

The cardinal foundation of any healthcare system is research. As we navigate the complexities of the current era, it is important to underscore the significance of research promotion in advancing the field of Allied Health. Healthcare organizations that focus on research not only deliver superior health services but also cultivate an environment conducive to staff development.²

Despite having the integral nature of roles, the research output in the Allied Health domain often pales in comparison to that of other healthcare sectors. This discrepancy not only hinders professional growth but also impedes the development of evidence-based practices that could significantly enhance patient outcomes. Research in Allied Health is not merely an academic pursuit; it is the driving force behind innovation, improved patient care, and the development of effective interventions. As with time, we have witnessed an increasing trend of evidence-based practice all over the world, besides doctors and nurses, thus Allied health professionals are also encouraged to participate in research.¹ There are multiple benefits to investing time in research for Allied Health professionals. It will help them to explore new frontiers, challenge existing paradigms, and contribute to the ever-expanding body of knowledge in healthcare. At a clinician level, it will include positive attitudes towards research, enhanced uptake of evidence from research

and its transformation into practice, and the development of critical thinking skills thus breaking the status quo. At a service level, allied health professionals who are active in research may transform the infrastructure and client care in an upgrading manner that could also affect the policy-making for the improvement of healthcare organizations. Therefore, it is very important for allied health professionals to participate in research as the lack of research evidence for interventions provided by allied health professionals poses a challenge, risking their contributions being overshadowed by more traditionally dominant healthcare professions depriving them of the deserved positions, and expansion of their scope of practice.³

Despite the increasing interest among allied health professionals in research, there are several barriers including time constraints, limited funding, competing priorities in clinical settings, inadequate research skills, and a lack of support from both higher authorities and colleagues. Other factors that play a huge role are ; the lack of confidence in presenting ideas before ethical committees, competitive writing to make them publishable in esteemed journals along with discussing ideas with seniors. All this happens as allied health professionals have only basic knowledge of research at the undergraduate level and at higher levels, they have a lack of support from organizations as well as inefficient mentoring for research.⁴

To promote a positive research culture for Allied health professionals, all these issues need to be resolved starting with certain initiatives like incorporating research into undergraduate studies, mandating research during the initial post-graduation training, conducting workshops, and providing organizational support for research endeavors. Furthermore, introducing specific research positions within healthcare organizations, such as “research facilitator”, “research fellow”, “research lead” or “clinical academics” can also play a vital role. These positions can be funded solely by a healthcare organization or in partnership with a university. However, they should be part of a healthcare setting rather than exclusively working within a university or

institution. Individuals recruited in these positions can help in providing academic support to the clinicians and their teams along with the development of their own research projects. There could be a positive impact from research positions as reported by literature in terms of enhanced individual research skills, increased participation in research projects as well and research-based clinical results for improvement of patient care. Research can furthermore be linked at the organizational level with education, professional development, service improvement, and practice development activities. A positive attitude along with increased motivation can be generated in clinicians who are involved in research by providing time-to-time feedback in the form of appraisal to researchers in different forms.⁵

References:

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