ABSTRACT

In India research in clinical medicine is not a new phenomenon. Innumerable number of research in clinical medicine are being constantly and continuously undertaken and pursued at the individual, institutional and community level. It is quite likely that quite a few of the deserving research works and their conclusions do not find a way for expression in medical literature. There is no single national nodal agency, which would guide, monitor and collect observations and conclusions of many a research in clinical medicine. There is an urgent need to collect and collate information in this regard from all over the country. The Association of Physicians of India (API) which is solely an academic body engaged in promotion of medical research and dissemination of medical knowledge is best suited to give a lead by pioneering the concept of “Medical Research and Information Academy”.

INDIA’S POTENTIAL FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH:

In India research in clinical medicine is not a new phenomenon. Centuries earlier to the dawn of modern science and modern scientific medicine—western civilisation, inquiring minds of Indians have dealt at great length on this subject. Medical research was not only about the disease but also on the matter of what keeps us mentally and physically healthy. Ancient Indian literature gives a comprehensive account of many diseases and their remedies. Most of these appear to be borne out of shrewd observations and follow up of cases. Enormous historical information by Sushruta about diabetes mellitus is one such example. The lead in medical research that was given to us by our forefathers, thousands of years ago was interrupted and abruptly stopped for a variety of historical reasons.

ADVENT OF MODERN SYSTEM OF MEDICINE:

With the advent of modern scientific medicine along with British rule, the country seized the opportunity to learn and adopt the new system of medicine and forged ahead in gaining mastery over modern medical sciences. This resulted in the emergence of great Indian medical men, expert medical teachers and original thinkers pari passu with medical research in clinical medicine. Many a medical research work in India was original, suiting to local conditions and environment and this helped to enrich the knowledge in medicine globally. As a corollary to this, national medical journals and research institutions have appeared in the country.

Before and after independence, several medical specialist Associations came into being and these are academic bodies and they held their annual scientific meets at national and regional levels with the sole objective of presentation and deliberations of scientific papers by medical research workers in clinical medicine. These Associations bring out their journals for publication of research works and results of clinical medicine in the country.

SPURT IN MEDICAL RESEARCH:

In the last few decades, with the expansion of medical institutions, medical colleges, appearance of new generation of energetic medical men interested in collecting medical data, there has been a spurt in medical research. This is also due to availability of resources and personnel. India with its huge population and massive clinical material has emerged as a destination for health care and medical research in clinical medicine. The Indian contribution in the area of biomedical and clinical research and healthcare have been significant and conforming to international standards.

Innumerable number of research in clinical medicine are being constantly and continuously undertaken and pursued at the individual, institutional and community level in India. Many of them may be poorly designed for want of proper guidance. There is no account of the number of such researches undertaken in the country. Interestingly only a small fraction of the enormous original work in the area of research in clinical medicine is available for reference through international data base. It is quite likely that quite a few of the deserving research works and their conclusions do not find a way for expression in medical literature. This is not surprising in view of several factors.

PRESENT SCENARIO:

There is no single national nodal agency, governmental or non-governmental which would guide, monitor and collect observations and conclusions of many a research in clinical medicine. Even the
Indian Council of Medical Research which is an organised sector in medical research in India has no reach over many medical research programmes in the country. The journals of the medical specialists’ Associations which are the mouthpieces of medical research work can neither supervise nor accommodate the publication of findings of all the medical scientific research work in respective fields. Interestingly annual conferences of medical specialists’ Associations being burdened with medical update sessions in view of ever burgeoning knowledge, do not find enough time to accommodate free papers which indeed are original scientific research works in clinical medicine in the country. In earlier days, annual scientific conferences of medical specialists’ Associations were the hub of ‘free paper’ presentations.

The current scenario curtails the very essence of scientific meets. A country’s worth in medicine is measured in terms of its medical research. This is particularly true for a developing country like India. Indigenous medical research throws light and its consequent application in health care delivery on Indian masses. One must prioritise this idea instead of thoughtlessly aping the West. It is time to take stock of the situation and act.

THE NEED

Several medical men are involved in research in clinical medicine in the country on a wide range of topics. Currently there is no consolidated information or statistics about the number, nature, quality and areas of interest in medical research. There is an urgent need to collect and collate information in this regard from all over the country.

SCOPE:

In a vast country like India with its diverse ethnicity, the scope for research in clinical medicine is enormous. Therefore research in clinical medicine ought to be guided and funded whenever needed. The outcome of the research should be gathered and published appropriately. Such a set up would be a guiding force for young and dynamic investigators in medicine and allied subjects.

NODAL AGENCY; ASSOCIATION OF PHYSICIANS OF INDIA:

The Association of Physicians of India (API) which is solely an academic body engaged in promotion of medical research and dissemination of medical knowledge is best suited to give a lead and pioneer the concept of “Medical Research and Information Academy”. API was the first medical specialists’ Association to come into existence and thus showed the way to other medical specialties in the country. API by nature of being an independent academic body can act without hindrance. It has enough strength and experience to realize this concept and put it into action appropriately and effectively.

Co-operation and assistance from its members whether they are in government service or in public institutions or independent consultant practitioners will be forthcoming. In fact this would be a welcome move.

ISTHIS A NEW EXPERIMENT FOR API?

API has enough expertise and success in running its wing- The Indian College of Physicians (ICP). Scientific activities of ICP including publication of proceedings of Annual National CME programme, monographs, technical series, sponsored fellowship programmes and also organising Continuing Medical Education programmes across the country are enough proofs of its credentials. API members have always encouraged to pioneer good programmes and appreciated good works.

“RESEARCH AND INFORMATION ACADEMY”:

The envisaged concept should be taken under the name and style of “Medical Research and Information Academy” as a wing of Association of Physicians of India. The objective and structure of this wing (with some modification if required) would be as follows.

Organisational Setup:

1. Promoter : Parenteral Body : API
2. Name : Medical Research and Information Academy (API)
3. Nature : A wing of API - almost on the same lines as ICP
4. Headquarters : Headquarters of API
5. Objective:
   a. To conduct, co-ordinate, promote, encourage, guide, fund and collect information and results of Medical Research in Clinical Medicine in the country and catalogue and publish them.
   b. Design, formulate and implement promotion of medical research activities in clinical medicine among academic and research bodies
6. To bring out a quarterly publication:
   a. Abstract of medical research work in the country
   b. Brief reports and discussions on published works and current topics
   c. Full texts of exceptional works in medical research in clinical medicine.
7. Office bearers
   a. Chairman and Vice Chairman (Chairman Elect)
   b. Honorary Secretary General, Honorary Scientific Secretary
   c. Members - 3 to 5 members from different zones in the country

These office bearers are either elected or invited by the Governing Body of the Association of Physicians India. The term of office bearers will be 2 to 3 years in order to help continuity of effective functioning.
8. Meetings: As applicable in API and ICP
9. Funds: To be raised by donations and sponsorships
10. Beneficiaries:
    Scientific medical research workers and broad audience embracing physicians and health care professionals.
11. ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMES:
    The programme envisages training in clinical investigations and educational programmes with participation of the members of the faculty along the lines of sponsored training programmes of ICP with some modifications.
12. AIM:
    The key aim is to improve standards of patient care to higher levels in our society and hospitals by research and innovation. Here lies an opportunity and mandate for the Association of Physicians of India to seize and implement.