

Research as an Avenue to Invigorate Your Practice?

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Most pharmacists undertook their education in pharmacy without consideration of practice setting. However, most people reading this journal have narrowed the focus of their practice to hospital pharmacy. Over time, many of us have developed a specialty interest, and some have gone on to become experts in their specialties. However, even a specialty can become routine once one has mastered its principles and complexities. For example, as pharmacists, none of us in our right minds would attempt to perform radial keratotomy, but ophthalmologists would approach this procedure with little or no anxiety because it would be routine and well within their skill set. Similarly, the everyday activities of even a pharmacy specialty practitioner may become routine or even mundane.

Have the clinical issues in your area become routine? If so, perhaps you should consider research as the next frontier of professional and career development. Not only can research be an avenue to invigorate our practices, but it also offers a bonus by way of our ability to share our research findings with the pharmacy and health care communities at large.

Some of you may be exclaiming, "But I have little experience in doing research!" Perhaps you are under the impression that all research must be sophisticated and funded. But in many cases, such assumptions are simply not true. Often, it is the simplest study that provides the most relevant information. Take, for example, the often-cited paper by Nicolau and colleagues¹ on once-daily (or extended-interval) aminoglycoside dosing. That article was arguably the impetus for the adoption of once-daily aminoglycoside dosing programs in many institutions throughout Canada and the United States. Upon closer scrutiny, however, we find that the study itself was a simple evaluation of the once-daily aminoglycoside regimen

initiated at the authors' institution.¹ Furthermore, there is no indication that the research was funded.¹

In preparing this article, I scanned a number of pharmacy journals, including *CJHP*, the *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, *Pharmacotherapy*, and *Annals of Pharmacotherapy*, and found numerous research publications that were not funded, or at least funding was not mentioned.

The word "research" comes from the Middle French "recherchier", meaning "to investigate thoroughly". The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines research as "careful or diligent search; studious inquiry or examination; the collecting of information about a particular subject."²

In caring for patients, all of us encounter questions for which no answers are available in the literature, despite diligent searching and studious inquiry. Indeed, whenever you hear yourself saying to the other members of your team, "This is all I could find. . . . The literature contains little or no information", you've got the seed for a potential research project!

Here is a series of questions you can ask yourself to determine if it is indeed feasible for you to undertake the project: What gaps in the literature need to be filled? Can you and your colleagues design a way to answer your question and hence make the information available to other practitioners? Who has the special skills, unique qualifications, or facilities to help you answer your question?

If you need help to get started, many resources are available to pharmacists interested in conducting research. For example, the names, e-mail addresses, and



specialty areas of CSHP Research Committee members are posted at the CSHP Web site.³ These members are willing to act as resources for pharmacists who desire assistance with research. The Research Committee held a Train-the-Trainers Research Workshop immediately before the 2002 Professional Practice Conference. This workshop was attended by at least one representative from each CSHP Branch with the intent that the “trainers” would go back to their respective Branches and hold local workshops. The CSHP Research and Education Foundation also provides funding support through research grants. The grant application form and even the evaluation (i.e., scoring) criteria are posted at the Society’s Web site.³

Aside from CSHP, other foundations and perhaps your own institution or department may be willing to provide funding support research. The following are just a few examples of searchable databases of funding opportunities: the Office of Research Services at the University of British Columbia (<http://www.orsil.ubc.ca>), the Grants Office at the British Columbia Research Institute for Children’s and Women’s Health (<http://www.bcriwh.bc.ca>), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (<http://www.cihr.ca>), and the Community of Science (<http://www.cos.com>). Also available are review articles^{4,5} that walk you through the research process.

The word “invigorate” means “to give life and energy to”.² So how about it? Is research an avenue by which you can invigorate your practice?

References

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