

Research: Issues of Quantity and Quality

I read the article “Beyond Pride in Teamwork”¹ with interest but am not sure that I agree with the conclusion that the decrease in the number of poster presentations at the Professional Practice Conference may be the “first signal that we are not doing enough to stay current and remain efficient.”

Rather, I wonder if this yet another indication of how understaffed many hospital pharmacies now are. As more and more demands are made on our time, certain items tend to remain on the “to-do” list. That is not to say that our core work is not being done. I have no delusions of being on the cutting edge of research, but I do know that I have looked at a number of cases and thought, “I should write that up or present that information to my colleagues.” But then reality sets in, and I realize that I just don’t have the luxury of the time that would be needed. I’m sure I am not alone in this. “Publish or perish” is all very well, but the reality for many of us is “publish or get the drugs to the patient”.

I believe that if we cannot resolve some of the staffing issues facing pharmacy, we really will see a decline in research. That indeed will be a sad day for the profession and for our patients.

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References

1. Walker SE. Beyond Pride in Teamwork. *Can J Hosp Pharm* 2000;53:310.

Reply:

Ultimately, I do not believe that we disagree. In fact, I agree completely with the closing statements of Ms Bailey’s letter, in which she relates current staffing

issues in pharmacy to the potential for a decline in research and the implications of such a decline for our profession and our patients.

The intent of my article¹ was not to identify a cause for the reduction in the number of poster presentations at the Professional Practice Conference (PPC) but rather to point out that there has indeed been a reduction and that it has the potential for downstream effects. This was a simple observation, made without benefit of an exhaustive analysis — and published in the journal before this year’s PPC posters had been presented.

I agree that the reduction in the number of posters could be another indication of how understaffed many hospital pharmacies are. However, I now have the benefit of having attended each of the poster sessions at the 2001 PPC, and I have begun to wonder if the reduction in number might also be related to the type of research that pharmacists are undertaking. Many of the 2001 poster presentations described pharmacy-based program evaluations or evaluations of patient outcomes from a pharmaceutical care perspective. This type of research takes more time and is more difficult to complete than some other types of research; it also does a lot more for the development of the profession. Therefore, simply looking at the numbers may not be a good way to determine the amount and quality of the research that is being done by hospital pharmacists.

Scott E. Walker
Editor, *CJHP*

Reference

1. Walker SE. Beyond pride in teamwork. *Can J Hosp Pharm* 2000;53:310.

