



**Editorial article:
Inculcating research culture among
members of the dental fraternity**

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In 2013, the Malaysian Education Blueprint (Higher Education) was developed by the Ministry of Education to guide the transformation process of the education system in this country for the next decade, starting from 2015 (1). The blueprint highlighted core aspirations for Malaysian higher education, which includes rapid expansion of research output and quality (1). This effort is in line with the nation's aspiration to uplift the standard of service provision among healthcare professionals, whose practice should advance on the essence of high quality scientific evidence.

In Malaysia, research activity in areas relating to oral health care is mainly undertaken by academics or researchers based in educational or research institutions (2). Such scenario is dissimilar in other countries with high research productivity, where patterns of research output could be observed among full time healthcare clinicians, whose practice would mainly involve clinical patient care, rather than teaching or research (3). Participation of full time clinicians in research activity in other countries has seen the production of high quality publications, mostly derived from effective collaboration with academicians, researchers, as well as members of the external agencies (4).

While the output of research activity among Malaysian clinicians is mediocre (2), dental research productivity in Malaysia also falls behind other countries within this region (5). It is discouraging to find the low level of research performance in dentistry in this country [rated as the lowest among the science, technology and medicine group in Malaysia (2); rated third in South East Asia's dental category behind Thailand and Singapore (5)], although the number of faculty members in Malaysia is higher in comparison with developed nations including Australia (6, 7).

A mechanism to encourage research activity and output among members of the dental fraternity needs to be developed. Research collaboration between Ministries and institutions, across professions and disciplines, locally and worldwide, needs to be enhanced to allow the conduct of high impact research activities that thrives on the experience and strength of members with various expertise.

In support for dissemination of knowledge and conduct of research activity, the Malaysian Dental Association endeavours to provide platforms for dental professionals throughout the world to share findings of their scientific studies through the Malaysian Dental Journal, which is made available online with free access. It is also hoped that other activities organised by the MDA, including the Scientific Convention and Trade Exhibition and Malaysia–International Dental Exhibition and Conference, could empower research culture, while the spirit of inter-collegiality amongst members of the profession is enhanced.

As the Association supports inculcation of research culture, it is incumbent on every individual within the dental fraternity, in spite of

their professional backgrounds, field of practice, or service sector, to also contribute towards this course, either in the form of direct participation, or by providing monetary support and access for the conduct of research activities. Quality research is an integral component towards achieving high standards of health care education and practice, which would subsequently contribute towards attainment of patients' wellbeing. If the nation seeks for high quality health care services and an efficient system, support for development of scientific research should therefore be prioritised, as the country move towards achieving a developed nation status by the year 2020.

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