

Passion and hard work produces high quality research in UK: response to Focus on China: should clinicians engage in research? and lessons from other countries

Rahil Hussein Kassamali¹, Sarah Jafarieh²

¹Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology, Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust, Department of Radiology, Bordesley Green East, Birmingham B95SS, UK; ²Royal Albert Edward Infirmary, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust, Department of Radiology, Wigan Lane, Wigan, WN12NN, UK

Correspondence to: Rahil Hussein Kassamali, Department of Imaging, Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, Birmingham, B9 5SS, UK.
Email: Rahil.kassamali@doctors.org.uk.

Submitted Nov 13, 2014. Accepted for publication Nov 14, 2014.

doi: 10.3978/j.issn.2223-4292.2014.11.21

View this article at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3978/j.issn.2223-4292.2014.11.21>

Zhang *et al.* recently published the paper entitled '*Focus on China: should clinicians engage in research? and lessons from other countries*' (1). We feel it is imperative that a proportion of clinicians are involved in clinical research. A large number of medical students complete medical school in the UK without any significant exposure to research. This gap in their medical education is worrying because research exposes one to scientific methodology and academic writing as well as developing an academic interest. Consequently, we feel that research skills should be increasingly integrated into medical school curriculums and timetables in the form of a Bachelor of Science degree, Masters Degree or through projects such as Student Selected Components (SSC's). This will in turn encourage those with a passion for academia to pursue a dedicated research post. Every medical school in the UK offers intercalated Bachelor of Science degree programmes and several medical schools have made this compulsory.

There are opportunities for one to have an academic career from the outset via the competitive Academic Foundation Programme. Throughout the two-year programme junior doctors can gain research skills in addition to the compulsory foundation programme clinical competencies. In 2012, there were approximately 500 funded academic places in the UK, which correlates to roughly 5% of total places (including academic and clinical posts) (2). Foundation year two doctors can further pursue academic speciality training programmes, which include an

academic component, entitled an Academic Clinical Fellow (ACF). Although there is no direct pathway, those with an academic inclination will locate the opportunities.

As doctors and health care professionals, we should be promoting high quality research in medicine; and furthermore, a good quality cohort of passionate medical researchers will in turn encourage further generations of research clinicians. Simultaneously, doctors not interested in a medical career, which incorporates research should not be forced to complete research as this could lead to poor studies that may mislead and adversely affect clinical practice. Doctors should be aware of their strengths and should build on these. We therefore disagree that higher research should advantage those entering more competitive clinical training programmes.

In the UK, medical research done within the NHS is funded mainly through the National Institute for Health Research, the Medical Research Council, the Department of Health and other government departments, medical research charities and pharmaceutical companies.

In conclusion, clinical research drives great care and brings cutting edge medicine to the forefront. Good quality medical research, via networks of driven clinicians worldwide, can equip doctors passionate about clinical delivery with the tools for better treatment and improved quality of life for patients with increased prevention of early deaths.

Disclosure: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Zhang Z, Winston GP, Zhao HT, Oei EH, Ai Q, Loffroy R, Lin T, Shen Y, Ng CK, Liu H, Civelek AC, Han Z, He YM, Ji LY, Wang YX. Focus on China: should clinicians engage in research? and lessons from other countries. *Quant Imaging Med Surg* 2014;4:413-25.
2. Carney S, Kelley T, Derbyshire L, Marlais M, Read J. Rough Guide to the Academic Foundation Programme, 2013. Available online: <http://www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/pages/academic-programmes> (accessed 12th November 2014).

Cite this article as: Kassamali RH, Jafarieh S. Passion and hard work produces high quality research in UK: response to Focus on China: should clinicians engage in research? and lessons from other countries. *Quant Imaging Med Surg* 2014;4(6):502-503. doi: 10.3978/j.issn.2223-4292.2014.11.21