

▪ *Educational & Professional Development*

F.I.T. for Research

BY

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God bless him, he who coined the acronym F.I.T. for research, Funds, Ideas and Time. Thus, making the essentials you need to produce research clear. At the same time, having the essentials does not mean that you will automatically have research. You need to work with these essentials to produce research work.

Let us consider clinical research in medicine.

Funds: You need funds to ensure suitable laboratories and a secretarial setup with secretaries proficient in the language of the research. You also need a library and a communication system and facilities for meetings.

Ideas: The point or subject of research is very important to consider and revise before you begin the research work. Remember that this is a variable part of your research. Choose the research idea that is expected to yield benefit to the local needs of your community and not necessarily the international community. A research result that may add little to science but benefit the economy by reducing the cost of an already known therapy or offering a cheaper alternative will make the new modality of treatment more affordable and hence the medical benefit comes indirectly.

Time: Research needs time to: read, think, design, implement, analyze, explain, conclude and then to publish. The result is only useful when it is disseminated, usually by publishing but also by talks and discussions in meetings. You do not need to be a full-time researcher or devote all your time to research. But you certainly must have enough time predetermined and earmarked for research. Clinical research needs to be done by practicing clinicians, not full-time researchers unless you are doing a meta-analysis. Assistants helping you or working with you in the research can be full-time researchers.

What about the situation in Egypt:

The clinical aspect of medical research in Egypt is done mainly by senior clinicians in university hospitals or equivalent institutions and mainly as a prerequisite for promotion to a higher post. The funds are absent and the infrastructure for research is much less than adequate, also it is required that for research to be considered for promotion it must add something new to the already current knowledge. The result is that the researcher finds that the only type of research that can be done in such circumstances is observational research on the patients under his care or available to observe. This means that the research is usually the result of applying a certain modality of treatment to a cohort of patients. This adds very little- if any -to the available knowledge in the area of research. The funds must come from the government. The industry will not offer any funds except for research that directly helps its purposes

As for the time, most of the institutions mentioned before have enough staff to carry on the duties of teaching and patient care and enough time to devote to research. So we have no problem here

What about the ideas, we should be modest and entertain ideas that help medical care in Egypt. And in any case, with modest resources our minds will get only modest ideas, naturally one usually thinks of ideas within the limits of his resources, this is the practical attitude of a practical man of science. I suggest that each department in each of the above-mentioned institutions should make a list of research topics that would benefit medical care in Egypt, keeping in mind that “The ideal is the enemy of the good”, and make it mandatory for those applying for promotion to have done at least half of the number of researches required for promotion from this list. Also, research should be

required from all staff for periodic evaluation and not only for promotion.
Time and Ideas are ready to be used. The big hurdle is the funds.

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