

## EDITORIAL

# Towards Academic Culture in Pakistan: Role of Medical Conference and How Challenging it is to Survive with Evolving Technology Advancement

Nighat Huda

For years, scientific medical conferences have been the pillar of academic culture development worldwide. In Pakistan as well medical conferences no doubt have become the mainstay of universities, professional institutions, professional associations, and government statutory bodies of higher learning. In the past decade we have seen a dramatic shift in how Conference is positioned within institutions. This may be attributed to the Higher Education Commission(HEC) Pakistan<sup>1</sup> which places strong value to conferences and supports institutions, in particular young researchers to share their results and eventually publish those studies in peer-reviewed journals. Moreover, HEC ranks universities higher on organizing conferences for Pakistani scientists as well as inviting research scholars of international repute.<sup>2</sup>

There is no disagreement on conference purpose; however, several concerns have been expressed on copyright issue related to abstracts, conference presentations, particularly presenters who focus on limited data presentations which become source of publicity by the media.<sup>3</sup> Technological advancement beyond doubt has raised copyright issues particularly when organizers or presenters post presentations on websites for free access.<sup>3</sup> Also with the increased use of power point, researchers have become more focused on preparing slick presentations, which at times fail to differentiate between cited work and original researcher data and conclusion.<sup>4</sup> Realizing the menace of technology, plagiarism software has now been used by universities and journals to check the authenticity of scientific thesis and articles.<sup>5,6</sup> In Pakistan, the Association for Excellence in Medical Education(AEME)<sup>7</sup> in its call for abstracts reinforces the criteria of institutional /ethical review board approval of local institutions that researchers' represent.<sup>8</sup> This is an example of how conference organizers can approach the issue of copyright. The benefits of conferences should not be overwhelmed by copyright issue. Conferences have several other benefits. For example, young researchers find conferences as a source for networking, interaction with national and international experts, while the organizers gain recognition, fame, tax free benefits and not the least additional source of income.<sup>3</sup> There is no harm in

such benefits as long as the academic culture of scientific conferences continues to provide a platform for budding researchers.

In Pakistan, in the past decade increasing number of conferences were held on wide ranging specialized medical issues. Despite being a new field of science, in 2015 alone, two separate international conferences were held on Health Professions Education (HPE) or medical education; one was organized by AEME in Islamabad<sup>8</sup> and within a span of eight months second conference was hosted by the University of Health Sciences in Lahore.<sup>9</sup> In both conferences, the format was dominated by keynote speakers presentations and parallel sessions of presenters 'studies on different themes in education. Obviously, these conferences reflect greater interest of Pakistani educators' in recent developments with an impact on future health professions education. But then in such circumstances many educators are compelled to make choice of one conference due to high cost of conference participation expense<sup>10</sup> and secondly, researchers may not have any new studies for submission for the second conference due to limited studies undertaken. Then the stake is high of several papers get repeated if more than one conference are held one within a span of few months. What is suggested is more collaboration among different organizers who should consider innovative strategies that will make room for researchers to participate through online.

Despite the challenges for adopting technology in conferences, this is an exciting time for incorporating technology as it opens the doors for great innovation and overall structure of future conferences. It is evident that virtual conference and mobile applications will continue to push conference organizers to re-examine their existing conference models.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately what we must stay focused on is that this is about promoting academic culture and networking; it is about providing researchers venues to share and accept criticism on their studies. This will have an impact on changing mental model and helping researchers challenge existing ideas and expand their views of the disciplines and the world. The protocols for presentations and publication will support researchers and institution goals. Thus Pakistani researchers as well will benefit from change of the traditional conference model.

✉ Nighat Huda

Professor & Director Health Professions Education (HPE)  
Liaquat National Hospital & Medical College  
Karachi.

Email: [huda@lnh.edu.pk](mailto:huda@lnh.edu.pk)

Received: 08-12-2015

Accepted: 10-12-2015

## REFERENCES:

1. <http://www.hec.gov.pk/Pages/HECMain.aspx>. Accessed December 1st, 2015
2. <http://www.hec.gov.pk/InsideHEC/Divisions/RND/ConferencesandMeetings/GOSCSW/Pages/Introduction.aspx>. Accessed December 1st, 2015
3. Berner, ES. Publications in Academic Medical Centers:

- Technology Facilitated Culture Clash. Acad Med 2014. □  
89;734-7
4. □ Berk, RA. Research on Power Point: From Basic Features □  
to Multimedia. Int J Technol teach Learn.2011;7;24-35
5. □ Kleinert S. Checking for Plagiarism, duplicate Publicat- □  
ion and text recycling. Lancet. 2011; 377:281-2
6. □ Acad Med. Editorial Policy, publication, ethics and com- □  
plete instruction for authors. Revised March 2013, http □  
for authors.aspx. Accessed December 4, 2015
7. □ <http://www.ae-me.org/> Accessed December 4, 2015
8. □ <http://www.ae-me.org/guidelines-abstractsubmission.php>. □  
Accessed December 4, 2015
9. □ <http://www.fui.edu.pk/FUIC/index.php/news-items-fuic/> □  
item/1-aeme-conference-2015. Accessed December 4, 2015
10. □ The scientist and the smartphone. Editorial .Nature Met-  
hods 7, 87,2010 doi:10.1038/nmeth0210-87

