

Editorial

Research and the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Specialty Trainees

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Singapore Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (SJOG) is now in the 40th year issue since March 1970 when it started off as The Proceedings of the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society.¹ Besides being the academic voice of the society and promoting academic collaboration of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology (O&G) fraternity in Singapore, SJOG has always provided our young O&G specialist trainees with timely opportunity to publish their academic endeavours.² Rapid advancement in technology has changed and is still changing our practice in O&G.³ The scope and depth for O&G research is expanding more than before.

The Journal is thus glad that we have 5 original articles from our specialist trainees for this issue. The first article on emergency cervical cerclage by Lubna Harharah et al showed that the procedure allowed prolongation of pregnancy beyond 28 weeks in 50% of 30 cases and that cervical dilatation of greater than 5 cm and nulliparity appeared to be poor prognostic features for emergency cervical cerclage. These data will help us to better counsel affected couple at our centres and assist them in making informed decision regarding emergency cerclage.

Choey B et al looked at androgen receptor gene trinucleotide (CAG) repeat polymorphisms in infertile male patients and found that the odds ratio for severely impaired spermatogenesis was 2-fold higher for patients with ≥ 26 CAG repeats than in those with <26 CAG repeats. Screening for androgen receptor CAG repeat polymorphisms may therefore be important for males with infertility and impaired spermatogenesis.

Lee JM et al in a case report demonstrated that the use of cyclosporine as an adjunct to low dose steroids is safe and effective for treating nephrotic syndrome in pregnancy, avoiding effects from high dose steroids. Lau M et al reported two cases of fetal hepatic mass with different outcomes and discussed

the antenatal counseling and management which can pose a dilemma due to its wide spectrum of presentation and outcome.

Jasmine Mohd et al reported on the survey by our College Of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, on the views of specialists on O&G subspecialty development in Singapore. Among other interesting findings, the majority (80%) of the 106 specialists felt that there was a need for training short of full subspecialty levels. Most felt, as a alternative to formal subspecialty accreditation, a skills-based certification program for Fellows with specialty interests would be a viable option (e.g. in urodynamics, colposcopy, or advanced obstetric ultrasound skills).

Optimal training of our O&G specialist trainees entails understanding of research process and methodologies, capability to carry out research, as well as ability to handle and analyse data and to write and publish a scientific manuscript properly. Academic publications are considered with gravity during O&G traineeship interviews and assessment. They are mandatory for O&G specialty training Exit examination and assessment as well as promotion to various levels of O&G consultant-ship in the restructured hospitals.

Nowadays, secondary schools and even primary schools of Singapore teach research methodologies almost on a routine basis and send their students to various academic institutions to participate in research. It is thus not surprising to see medical students and even preadmission students discussing their medical research papers which they had submitted or published. They had worked on these papers under the supervision of inspiring mentors while they were on attachment in the hospitals.

While academic criteria of research papers for assessment, examination and promotion are by themselves strong motivating factors for our trainees to conduct research, we need to ensure that our trainees are well supported in terms of research skill training, time and motivation. The intrinsic motivation of the trainee is without doubt necessary and important. However a trainee is more likely to publish more useful and better quality research output/papers

if he/she is guided and inspired by a good mentor and given time to participate and interact in research

meetings. It is thus critical for our training system to engender good mentors and to devote sufficient resources for academic research and training.

REFERENCES

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