

HOW I WROTE AND PUBLISHED MY FIRST CASE REPORT?

Farooq Azam Rathore¹

This article may be cited as: Rathore FA. How i wrote and published my first case report? Khyber Med Univ J 2012; 4(4): 197-198.

I still remember, writing and publishing my first case report. I hope that I can enlighten my young colleagues with the valuable lessons I learned during that process. It was April 2007 when I was a third year resident in FCPS Rehabilitation Medicine program at the Armed Forces Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine (AFRIM), Rawalpindi. A 20 years old male, was transferred from the department of neurology, Military Hospital, Rawalpindi with acute flaccid paraplegia, pressure ulcers and urinary tract infection for spinal rehabilitation. We used to receive non traumatic spinal cord injuries (SCI) quite frequently. But this guy had acute flaccid paraplegia following acute meningococcal meningitis and nobody at my institute had heard of this particular complication of meningococcal meningitis. The details of the case can be read online.¹

In the evening I ran a quick search on Google and didn't find much to explain this unusual and rather weird complication of a relatively common infectious disease in Pakistan. The next day I went to an experienced Neurologist (with 28 years' service) to discuss this case. We had a very interactive and enlightening discussion on the possible pathogenesis of the disease which I have described in detail in the actual case report.¹ Just, when I was about to leave, as a young and naïve researcher I asked him "Sir! Do you think that this qualifies as a case report in a medical Journal?"

I still remember his facial expressions and the (sarcastic) smile on his face when he replied "Case Report? I have seen dozens of such cases in my practice. Why would such a case make a case report?" Feeling a little embarrassed on asking such a silly question, I thanked him for his time and walked out of the office with the pile of patient's documents in my hands.

Later that night I decided to learn more about the case and ran a Medline search with "meningococcal meningitis" and "flaccid paraplegia" as the keywords. I was amazed to see that there were only 25 hits and only 16 of them actually addressed 'flaccid paraplegia after

meningitis". (At that time Pubmed indexed 15 million articles). This got me excited and after going through all the abstracts and conducting a similar search on Science Direct, OVID and Springerlink I was convinced that this condition was a rare complication of meningococcal meningitis. I consulted my supervisor the next day and we decided to go ahead with the case report plan. I sent an inquiry to the editor of the Spinal Cord about the possible publication of this case. I got a positive response asking for submission for the editorial and peer review. I submitted the manuscript after three months and after two revisions received the letter of acceptance in Aug, 2007.

I learned few lessons from this case and its publication which I would like to share so that my younger colleagues may not get slowed or overwhelmed by the comments of the "Senior" and "Experienced" clinicians with decades of experience under their belts.

The culture of medical research and writing is still evolving in Pakistan and most of the work has been done only in the last one decade or so. It was never part of the medical education during the early days and students never got a chance to learn this art during their medical schools and residency days. Some of them might not be very keen to encourage their junior colleagues in sharing their experiences in form of medical writing and those who encourage are many times unable to guide them adequately.

Being a successful and busy clinician doesn't mean that one is also successful in medical writing and in sharing his clinical experience with others. It is not uncommon to see young researchers with better publication and presentation record than the experienced clinicians. Don't be overwhelmed by the seniority of a person if he/she discourages you from reporting a case or conducting medical research.

Just because a clinician in a particular country has seen many cases of a rare disease, doesn't mean that the rest of the medical world is also familiar with such cases. The world is a global village and every part of this village has its unique health issues and medical complications profile. We can only learn if we share our experiences with others and let others evaluate them. What better way to share than to write and submit to an international journal?

As a young researcher do not wait to conduct your first randomized controlled trial in order to publish in medical journals. Apart from original research articles there are many other categories which allow physicians and researchers to share their experiences, express their

1: Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, Combined Military Hospital, Lahore Cantt and CMH Lahore Medical College, University of Health Sciences, Lahore

Address for correspondence:

Farooq Azam Rathore

FCPS, OJT(USA)

Assistant Professor, Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, Combined Military Hospital, Lahore Cantt, Pakistan

Phone: +92-312-9549821

farooqrathore@gmail.com

Date Submitted: October 20, 2012

Date Accepted: October 30, 2012

opinions and interact with their peers all around the globe. These include editorial; special communications; letters to editors; case reports; clinical images; clinical quiz; personal perspective; book reviews etc. So next time you see an unusual case or a rare complication, don't hesitate to report and share it with a global audience.

"Whatever we possess becomes of double value when we have the opportunity of sharing it with others."²

Jean-Nicolas Bouilly (1763-1842); Writer, Politician

REFERENCES:

1. Rathore MF, Gill ZA, Malik AA, Farooq F. Acute flaccid paraplegia: a rare Complication of meningococcal meningitis. Spinal Cord. 2008;46:314-6.
2. 2: Inspirational Quotes about Sharing. Available from <http://www.values.com/inspirational-quotes/value/107-Sharing> (Accessed 27th Sept 2012)

KMUJ web address: www.kmuj.kmu.edu.pk

Email address: kmuj@kmu.edu.pk