

Creating Scholarship from Your Daily Work – Tips for Increasing Scholarly Output during Medical Training

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Medical training is a rewarding but challenging time in a physician's career. Balancing clinical work, staying up-to-date with literature, and managing personal life is time-consuming. To add to this, for those who want to pursue a career as a physician-scientist or conduct outcomes research, it is even more challenging, and the word "research" can sometimes sound intimidating. Therefore, in clinical training programs we now often use the world scholarly activity. Scholarly activity is an essential part of medical training and encompasses many pursuits such as case reports, retrospective studies, quality improvement work, educational curriculum development, patient safety projects, meta-analyses and systematic reviews, prospective studies, and randomized controlled trials. While there are several approaches to maximize your scholarly output during medical training, here we review some tips on how to create scholarship from your day-to-day work.

Saw an interesting case:

During your training, if you saw an interesting case or a unique presentation of a common clinical presentation or notice a few similar cases, this is an opportunity to publish a case report or case series.¹ Several journals also have "image of the month" sections so if there is a striking clinical image, endoscopic, radiographic, or pathological image, you can consider publishing in those sections as well.

Core lecture:

As part of your clinical training, you are often asked to review a topic or give a lecture on a topic pertaining to your training. In preparation for that, you review extensive literature and prepare a systematic approach to managing or approaching a clinical problem. Since you have already performed an extensive review of literature, this is an opportunity to convert your work into a review article. Partnering with an expert mentor or colleague

will likely provide valuable feedback which will improve the chances of a publication.

See room for improvement in your clinical work or workflow:

During our daily work, we often notice opportunities in the clinical work itself or the related workflow, where there is room for improvement. This is a good opportunity to conduct a quality improvement project.² The classic quality improvement project revolves around the PDSA cycle (plan-do-study-act). There could be several PDSA cycles before improvement is seen. Quality improvement work can both be presented at regional, national, and international meetings as well as can be published.

Questions about a recent article you read:

We all read and review recent articles. If there are any questions or points that you need clarification on, this is an opportunity to write a "letter to the editor" to the journal.³

Created or implemented a new curriculum, module, or examination system:

The development or implementation of a new curriculum, module or examination, or teaching system falls under the umbrella of educational innovation.⁴ Systematically sharing your experience at your local institution and lessons learned while implementing it is an opportunity to publish your work and ideas as education-related research.⁵

Notice a clinical pattern not described in the literature:

This provides an opportunity for retrospective research where you can highlight your observations. Oftentimes, these retrospective research projects provide the hypothesis for future clinical trials and prospective studies.

In summary, there is no one way to succeed in maximizing your scholarly output during clinical training. The above-mentioned strategies provide some suggestions on how you can convert your day-to-day work into clinical scholarship. This allows you to make your work count twice and in the process, one has the opportunity to refine the skills that will eventually help in conducting future clinical research, i.e. using reference manager software, medical writing, and editing, formatting articles to journal formats and most importantly develop critical thinking.

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