

## EDITORIAL : PUBLISH OR PERISH! MANUSCRIPT WRITING AND PUBLICATION OF POSTGRADUATE DISSERTATIONS

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Publish or perish! So, the saying goes for any academic discipline. Since the inception of the Masters in Obstetrics and Gynecology program in the University of Nairobi in 1975, few postgraduate dissertations get published in a peer reviewed journal. Unpublished data ends up being grey literature and is rarely used to inform policy and practice. Anecdotal evidence shows the lack of writing skills as the main barrier to publishing. In 2016/2017, through the Structured Operational Research and Training Initiative (SORT IT), a selected group of faculty members within the Department were trained in manuscript writing. SORT IT is a collaboration between the University of Nairobi, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and the UNICEF/UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) based at World Health Organization. With capacity built within the Department, 10 postgraduate student dissertations were converted to manuscripts for peer review and publication.

The postgraduate students participated in a one-week SORT IT manuscript writing workshop which was recently incorporated into the teaching curriculum. The SORT IT course is an outcome-oriented model with the course structured into three one-week workshops of proposal writing, data collection/management and manuscript writing (1). In the postgraduate curriculum, proposal writing, and data collection/management were already in the curriculum. The curriculum review not only offered a unique opportunity to incorporate the SORT IT scientific manuscript writing, but also to enhance local sustainability of this training approach.

Imparting writing skills during the in-service training is thought to be one of the most effective and sustainable ways to build capacity for leadership, career progression and better quality patient care (2) particularly for low- and middle-income countries such as Kenya. The success of the SORT IT model is based on being a strong, hands-on mentorship and result oriented approach. Facilitation in the course was provided 100% by the faculty in the Department with senior to junior mentorship modelling by SORT IT Alumni.

Various topic areas of Obstetrics and Gynecology were covered in the course covering issues addressing pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum care and screening for cervical cancer. It is hoped they will enhance credible scientific knowledge translation and responsiveness to public healthcare needs. Selection of the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology in East Central and Southern Africa (JOGECA) for peer review of the manuscripts and publication was merited as it has a strong readership by Obstetricians and Gynecologists since the 1980's, having been founded by the Kenya Obstetrical and Gynecological Society. It is also renowned in the region and globally for engagement in publishing research, reviews, basic and translational science in Sexual and Reproductive health (4) and is now available on open access. A dissemination presentation to the Dean and Principal of Medical School is scheduled to further enhance visibility of the SORT IT approach to operational research and encourage dons and students to continue to publish. It is anticipated that the subject area scope will be expanded when other university departments and institutions adopt the same approach for their postgraduate programs.

**References**

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