

“A journey well begun is half done”

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Research is considered as the highest form of academics. The MDS curriculum aims to orient the post graduate doctors towards research and for this a Thesis/Dissertation has to be submitted 6 months before appearing for the final examination as per DCI guidelines, 2007.

For any thesis work to be carried out, a thesis protocol has to be submitted within 6 months of joining the MDS course. The thesis protocol has to be formulated very diligently and systematically. This is one of the documents which has to be submitted to the university at the time of final examination. However, currently many of the universities and institutions are not giving the thesis protocol its due importance. Instead of a detailed protocol that can guide a student with the Thesis, a single paper format is being submitted. This should be changed gradually and thesis protocol should once again be prepared very diligently.

The first step towards the preparation is identification of the lacuna in literature for which the research needs to be carried out. The next step involves scanning of literature to verify the facts and establish a Null Hypothesis which 'refers to a general statement or default position that there is no relationship between two measured phenomena'. Subsequently a scientifically proven methodology needs to be adopted for the study. A pilot work should be carried out beforehand to check the feasibility of the study or to verify any additional work needed for the fulfilment of the study.

The contents of the Thesis Protocol should include: Introduction, Review of Literature, Aims & Objectives, and Materials & Methods with Statistical Tests, Bibliography, Consent forms and proformas for collecting data. The Introduction should clearly mention the lacuna in literature and the need to carry out this study along with the Null Hypothesis. The Review of Literature should incorporate relevant work done by other researchers in the same field and clearly identify the lacuna in the literature. The Aim should be clearly identified and the objectives should be drafted which would aid later on in writing the results. The Material & Methods should clearly identify the Inclusion & Exclusion criteria. The sample size should be statistically significant. Statistics section should include the biostatistics test to be applied and the method of recording the readings. All the references should be according to Vancouver Style.

Another crucial parameter in In Vivo studies is the informed consent of the patient. The consent form should be in a language understood by the patient. The patient should have full right to withdraw from the study at any given time.

Once the Thesis Protocol has been prepared it has to be presented before an Institutional Ethics Committee which should be constituted as per the ICMR Guidelines. This Institutional Ethics Committee should be recognised and registered with the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Directorate General. The recommendations of this Committee should be taken very seriously and the changes should be incorporated in the Protocol at the earliest. A certificate of approval for the study should be obtained from this Committee before commencing with the thesis. This certificate is required later on while submitting the research work for publishing in any National or International journal.

I am hopeful that this Editorial would benefit the post graduate students who are in the process of writing up their thesis protocol. I thank all the contributors, readers, reviewers for their continual patronage and support to this journal.