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Editorial

Art of reporting a case: Need to cultivate it!

Publication of case reports (CR) is nothing new and dates back from the times of Egyptian medicine (1600 B.C.) and specialists from all the medical branches, including orthopaedics have described interesting and rare CR.¹ CR describes important scientific observations that are missed or undetectable in clinical trials.² This may include a rare or unusual clinical condition, a previously unreported or unrecognized disease, unusual side effects to therapy or response to treatment, and unique use of imaging modalities or diagnostic tests to assist diagnosis of a disease.

In the recent past, many of the reputed and high indexed medical journals have been shying away from publishing CR. It is also true that many case reports do not add significantly to the body of knowledge and these consume valuable page space. The CR are infrequently cited causing a “pull down” effect on the impact factor of the journal, and also the CR are at the lowest level in the hierarchy of evidence. Furthermore, CR has been criticized for being anecdotal, uncontrolled, irreproducible and subjectively interpreted and were considered worthless pieces of writing without a clear clinical message for the reader. We however, believe that this is unfortunate as that a carefully prepared CR may play a valuable role in both the advancement of medical knowledge and the pursuit of education. Hence, this journal has decided to publish this special on line issue of interesting and rare orthopaedic CR. In the past, CR has proven significant in the subsequent discovery of a disease like it has done it for Kaposi's sarcoma and Parkinson's disease.

Writing CR is often considered a simple and easy task, which does not require extensive research and analysis. However, on the contrary, it is not as easy as it seems to write a good CR. Moreover, it is now becoming increasingly difficult for a CR to get published in a reputed journal. For writing a good CR, “the rule of Cs” need to be followed. The CR should be **C**lear, **C**oncise, **C**oherent and must **C**onvey a **C**risp message.

For the majority of doctors, writing a case report may represent their first effort at getting articles published in medical journals, and it is considered a useful exercise in learning how to write scientifically.² The probability of getting any research work published in a reputable journal is determined primarily on how

well the arguments are presented scientifically, i.e., how well the CR is supported or discussed.³ The editors and reviewers want proof of the rarity of the described condition in a CR and the scientific explanations for it. If this is not complied, a CR is likely to be rejected immediately and unfortunately this is a usual scenario leading to higher rejection rates of CR.

It is a known fact that all science is rooted in observations, and CR will continue to have their little space for reporting new observations for generating new hypotheses. The CR may generate a new hypothesis and but cannot prove it.⁴ Hence, despite being considered as the lowest level of evidence; these continue to be relevant for clinical practice, research, and medical education. CR may look like storytelling, which is a written form of the verbal presentation of a case history. While writing CR, authors should ensure that the description is accurate, arguments well-supported and recommendations practical and rational. It is a fact that the total population of researchers is continually rising every year, including in India. The innovation, research, and publication are necessary for both the clinicians and scientists to learn and progress further in their career⁵ and hence the commonly used phrase of “Publish or Perish” should now be changed to “Publish and Prosper.” Writing a CR may be the beginning of your glorious and fruitful medical career!

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