

# Writing Letters to the Editors as a Method to Teach and Support Learning

Sir,

My colleagues and I are faculty of the Operative Dentistry and Endodontics residency program in Karachi, Pakistan. As part of the education of our postgraduate residents, we offer a weekly journal club session. The objective is to enhance residents' understanding of research and critical appraisal of the published literature; thus, imparting higher-order learning detailed in Bloom's taxonomy. At the session, we are faced with a unique situation in which we have learners from all four postgraduate years. It was noted that the engagement, especially from the junior residents, during the sessions was lacking. They appeared to listen and understand during the sessions. But, an objective assessment of their understanding was not possible.

Therefore, in order to enhance the junior residents' interest and assessment of their learning, we utilized dual pedagogies for the journal club sessions. These were Inquiry-based learning and collaborative learning approach.<sup>1,2</sup>

The session is set up so that the residents select a peer-reviewed published paper from their assigned list of topics and bring it for discussion. The paper is distributed amongst all members of the journal club, one week in advance. During the journal club, the presenter gives background of the papers and critically analyses the methodology and results. One of the tasks assigned to the residents attending the journal club is to write a letter to the editor with an active input from peers critically appraising the article discussed in that session. This has served two purposes. Firstly, it helped as a formative assessment tool for the faculty to check for and of learning during the session. Secondly, this activity engaged the residents with the excitement of scientific methods and encouraged residents to carry out relevant literature searches and contribute to the discussion with peers during and after the session as peer-mentored learning.

I am also pleased to share that of the letters drafted during our journal clubs nearly 12 letters have been published so far in respective peer-reviewed journals. Some of the most recent ones are cited here.<sup>3-5</sup>

Indeed, it is heartening to know that the idea of doing something creative inculcated a sense of ownership within the learners and

they valued this weekly session more than any other learning assignments with a publication as a pleasant byproduct of this activity.

## COMPETING INTEREST:

The authors declared no competing interest.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION:

FU: Contributed to the idea and design and write-up.

FR: Revising and critical review.

RG: Revising and critical review.

All the authors have approved the final version of the manuscript to be published.

## REFERENCES

1. Scager K, Boonstra J, Peeters T, Vulperhorst J, Wiegant F. Collaborative learning in higher education: Evoking positive interdependence. *CBE-Life Sci Educ* 2016; **15**(4): par 69. doi: 10.1187/cbe.16-07-0219.
2. Pedaste M, Maeots M, Siiman LA, De Jong T, Van Riesen SA, Kamp ET, et al. Phases of inquiry-based learning: Definitions and the inquiry cycle. *Educ Res Rev* 2015; **14**:47-61.
3. Habib S, Umer F. Comments on "Artificial intelligence applications in restorative dentistry: A systematic review." *J Prosthet Dent* 2022; **127**(1):196-7. doi: 10.1016/j.prosdent.2021.08.003.
4. Adnan N, Haji Z, Khan FR. Comments on 'Pulpal and periapical disease in crowned vital teeth: A prospective matched cohort study.' *Aust Endod J* 2022. doi: 10.1111/aej.12664.
5. Javed F, Haji Z, Khan FR. Comments on pulpal and periapical status of the vital teeth used as abutment for fixed prosthesis: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Prosthodont* 2022; **31**(2):93. doi: 10.1111/jopr.13466.

*Fahad Umer, Farhan Raza and Robia Ghafoor*

.....  
 Department of Surgery, The Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan

.....  
 Correspondence to: Dr. Fahad Umer, Department of Surgery, The Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan  
 E-mail: fahad.umer@aku.edu

.....  
 Received: September 24, 2022; Revised: September 25, 2022;  
 Accepted: June 14, 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29271/jcpsp.2023.07.828>

.....