

Hong Kong Journal of Paediatrics

香港兒科醫學雜誌 (New Series)

An Official Publication of
Hong Kong College of Paediatricians &
Hong Kong Paediatric Society
c/o Hong Kong College of Paediatricians, Room 801,
Hong Kong Academy of Medicine Jockey Club
Building, 99 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Aberdeen,
Hong Kong.

Editorial Board

Chief Editor

CHAN Chi Fung (陳志峰)

Associate Editors

CHEUNG Yiu Fai (張耀輝)

LI Albert Martin (李民瞻)

WONG Sik Nin (黃錫年)

Members

CHEUNG Pik To (張璧濤)

CHIU Man Chun (趙孟準)

HON Kam Lun (韓錦倫)

KWONG Ling (鄺玲)

LAM Hung San (林鴻生)

LAU Sum Ping (劉森坪)

LEE Tsz Leung (李子良)

LEUNG Chi Wai (梁志偉)

LIU Kam Wing (廖鑑榮)

Low Chung Kai (盧忠啟)*

TSAO Yen Chow (曹延洲)

YEUNG Chap Yung (楊執庸)

Honorary Advisors to the Editorial Board

Andrew BUSH, *United Kingdom*

Don M. ROBERTON, *Australia*

David K. STEVENSON, *USA*

GUI Yong-Hao, *China*

Business Manager

Tsui Nai Shun (蔡迺舜)**

*Representing HK College of Paediatricians

**Representing HK Paediatric Society

Publisher

Hong Kong Journal of Paediatrics is
published by Medcom Limited, Room 504-5,
Cheung Tat Centre, 18 Cheung Lee Street,
Chai Wan, Hong Kong.
Tel: (852) 2578 3833, Fax: (852) 2578 3929,
Email: mcl@medcom.com.hk

Indexed in EMBASE/Excerpta Medica, Science
Citation Index Expanded (SCIE) and Scopus

Website: www.hkjpaed.org

ISSN 1013-9923

Editorial

Paediatric Research: The Essence of Advancement in Paediatrics

The local paediatricians have just celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the Hong Kong College of Paediatricians. When we looked back in the past 2 decades, the College has undoubtedly improved the quality of the local paediatricians by providing more structural training format and applying stringent accreditation processes for training centres, trainers and trainees. That's what we should be proud of and thankful to the leaders and members who have been serving selflessly towards these goals. However, what is lagging behind is the enhancement of paediatric research in our locality. So far, the College has been focusing on the development of matters related mainly to clinical practice and service of paediatrics, with relatively few attentions being drawn into the promotion of paediatric research. It may be due to the priority setting in the previous years, but as an established professional body now, it may be the right time to revisit our directives. When we look at the objectives of our College, promoting research is listed as one of our missions.

Although not explicitly expressed, there are common resentments towards the term "research" in many paediatricians' mind. "Research" may imply additional workload, negative auditing results that may reveal shortcomings, or high sounding basic or translational research that appears to have no direct relevance to most practicing paediatricians. Some also thinks that research is primarily the responsibility of those working in the University and therefore others do not have to bother. In addition, the difficulties in performing paediatric research also defer paediatricians to venture into this area. The difficulties include the relative low patients' number in most paediatric diseases when comparing to that of the adult counterparts. The inadequate sample size may eventually hinder the recruitment and most centres have to collaborate with others before meaningful study can be conducted. The relatively small patients' population also put paediatrics in a disadvantageous position when paediatricians are vying for research funding allocated by either local academic or health authority, because that may imply "low" social impact. Though most of us know "number" does not equivalent to "impact", unfortunately they have often been linked.

While facing with similar kind of unfavourable factors, paediatricians in most other developed countries still consider research as the prime mover for the advancement in paediatrics. The concept of paediatric research can be very broad, covering issues from healthy children to the sick one; also from clinical to basic science. To cite some examples, part of the research is closely linked to the community and child health issue, such as the original article describing the intermediate term effects of melamine contaminated milk product on the local and China paediatric cohort of this issue. It addresses a locally relevant health

related event and has significant impact on future health policy making. It can also relate to clinical paediatric practice, such as verification of existing practice guidelines and changing in the epidemiology of some common paediatric illnesses, such as the article in this issue describing the daytime sleepiness and obstructive sleep apnoea from patients with β -thalassaemia intermedia. It unfolds a new observation in a group of patients previously thought to be relatively asymptomatic. While others are concerning more on hospital paediatric practice, and the article on the prevalence of cytogenetic abnormalities in patients with genitourinary tract defect is one of this example. Finally is the translational and basic research related to paediatric illnesses, such as the article illustrating the alternation of murine neural stem cells under the situation of hypoxic-ischaemic encephalopathy of this issue. Therefore, except for those involved bench laboratory support, paediatric research is something that most paediatricians can participate. However, there are some basic skills that one has to develop. In general, the local paediatricians have been well trained and equipped with the ability to critically appraise research works of others but with much less training in conducting research hands on. The College and both Universities should shoulder the responsibility and provide more training opportunities in this aspect.

In recent years, the accreditation bodies in many countries, including China and Taiwan have already emphasized the importance of research in all fields of

medical sciences and significant amount of resources have been invested for this purpose. There have been some research funding from the Hong Kong College of Paediatricians and Hong Kong Paediatric Society supporting some child health related projects in the past, however, they are not offered in a regular basis and were not opened for application. The scope is also too restrictive and narrow. Both organizations should invest more on this important aspect to uplift the standard of local paediatric research in the future. The ultimate benefit will go to our children.

With the establishment of the Centre of Excellence in Paediatrics (CEP) or Children's Hospital in a few years time, we hope that paediatric research will be integrated as a major component from the very beginning. It is because we believe paediatric research is the essence of advancement in paediatrics. Without a significant research component, the hospital will never achieve the excellent status as reflected by the experience of other countries. We sincerely hope that our local paediatricians, College, Hospitals and Universities can work together and aim for this goal. Then we can foresee a more fruitful development of paediatrics in our locality. Only with this, someday we can be the leader, not always the follower.

GCF CHAN
Chief Editor