

"Researching the research interest" an audit of research involvement in Emergency Medicine Trainees of Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Research involvement among Emergency Medicine (EM) trainees is a critical yet under-studied area, particularly within Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC). In Sri Lanka, where Emergency Medicine is currently in its establishing phase, trainees face unique challenges. This study investigates the research involvement, knowledge, and perceived barriers among EM trainees to provide actionable recommendations for enhancing the local EM research culture in LMICs.

Objectives: The study aims to evaluate research knowledge, interest, and output among Sri Lankan EM trainees. It identifies systemic barriers and resource gaps while providing actionable recommendations to bridge the "interest-application" divide and establish a sustainable research culture within this developing specialty in an LMIC.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using an anonymous, voluntary, self-administered questionnaire with 63 EM trainees across four current batches in Sri Lanka. Data were collected using MS Excel and focused on previous research involvement, publication, and presentation history, attendance at research courses, basic knowledge of research stages, specific research interests, and also the perceived areas needing support and specific challenges.

Results: The findings revealed a significant latency in the "research involvement" among the trainees. While a majority expressed a strong desire to contribute to the evidence base of EM, there was a noticeable gap between this interest and actual research output. Data indicated that 62.2% of trainees found difficulty in initiating research projects. Key barriers identified included a lack of confidence and technical skills in research methodology. While involvement in clinical reports and audits is more common as a requirement of training, levels of journal publications and conference presentations remained low. Key requirements include dedicated mentorship, protected research time, and increased guidance in converting clinical work into academic abstracts.

Conclusion: There is a substantial gap between research interest and application among Sri Lankan EM trainees to develop an "EM Research Culture," which requires interventions. Dedicated mentorship, access to reference materials, protected research time, and funding are the key requirements. Recommendations include mentoring in abstract writing, presenting, and publishing, and increasing motivation and academic output within the field.