

Guest Editorial

It is a great honour to be asked to write an editorial for the inaugural edition of the Asian Medical Students' Journal.

The AMSA itself has been active for over 20 years and it is very timely for a research journal devoted to medical student research to be published under its auspices. Journals of this sort that have an international focus are very suited to on-line publication. This will mean ease of access to subscribers and that published material is brought out with very little delay and is right up-to-date.

Universities are increasingly encouraging students to undertake original research. This has a number of important advantages; students become familiar with research techniques and better able to interpret other research work, they find out early if a career of research is likely to suit them and they have the opportunity to enhance their own reputations and that of their university. Some of you may discover something really important – the first step on the way to your Nobel prize. I think academics will turn increasingly to student research journals to look for the medical researchers of the future.

Students have not always been encouraged in their research. Werner Forssman who is a hero of interventional cardiologists, performed the first cardiac catheterisation on a human on himself while he was a medical student in 1929. He used a sterile urinary catheter which he inserted through one of his cubital veins as far as it would go. He went around to the X ray department and persuaded a friend to X ray his chest. The catheter was sitting in the right atrium. He was eventually dismissed from his hospital for this. By then he had repeated the experiment on himself until he ran out of accessible veins. Perhaps encouraged by the usefulness of the urinary catheter he took up a career in urology.

His work inspired cardiologists to begin more orthodox research into cardiac catheterisation. Forssman was awarded the Nobel prize in 1956 for this work.

This is not meant to suggest that members of the AMSA carry out research of this sort.

One of the great virtues of scientific research in general and of medical research in particular is that it is international. Scientists and medical researchers move around the world constantly to work and lecture and attend meetings. This international journal should enable medical students from many countries to exchange ideas and make contact and form friendships with colleagues throughout the region. I look forward to reading about you and your research. I think the journal has a great future and I wish it well.

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