

Editorial

Expnding PM&R: Ideas to ponder

One of the largest industries in the world is the healthcare industry. Indian healthcare system is experiencing 22–25% growth in medical tourism and is expected to double its size from present to US\$ 6 billion in a year or two (Indian brand equity foundation). 20–25 years have been added to the average life span of Indians in the last 50 years. More people are going to need our care and services. I don't see any dearth for patients or competition for mere survival, both in the corporate and other health sectors. The pressures of our work and economy will help create new models of health care and rehabilitation to evolve for better care with effective outcomes.

Advances in technology is already shaping our future to help us achieve greater success in preventing and managing disability. Amongst the new generation of physiatrists, many want to learn new skills and procedures or subspecialize in PM&R. A majority have already specialized in musculoskeletal pain medicine, SCI medicine, electro-diagnosis, pediatric rehab, surgical interventions and a few in research. My observations in the past two decades give me a gut feeling that this is the way forward to improve the speciality and establish ourselves among our medical and paramedical colleagues. This will also help us deliver a comprehensive, economical, service package with a high value on relationships, for the long-term benefit of persons with disability.

In this era of evidence-based medicine, research is very much needed to prove the value and efficacy of our care. The gold standard, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trials are expensive, labor intensive and difficult to do in the field of rehabilitation medicine, often because of a lack of clarity about the ethics of denying a said treatment in the control arm. Therefore, when feasibility issues preclude clinical trials, there is a need to look at other observational research designs to gauge the clinical effectiveness of interventions.

Are we progressing well and fast as we should? In the coming years, let us focus on getting our training programs uniform and robust. Let's have faith in our work and future, and dedicate ourselves to learning our discipline so that we can lead by example. The rest will fall in its place.

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