

Research, Publication and Standardization in Allied Health

Allied Health is an obscure description for a large group of non-physician / non-nursing healthcare professionals. Many contend that this term is outdated and in need of overhaul. One problem is that it is very difficult to pinpoint which professions fall under the global allied health umbrella. In some countries, certain allied health professions do not exist. Respiratory Therapy is a profession not found in countries such as Australia, but is found in the United States, Canada, and China. Though respiratory therapy is present in many countries, including the Philippines, the scope of practice can be very different and limiting in nature.

A common thread among allied health professionals around the globe is the need to establish our rightful place in the field of health care. Though we have come a long way, further work is required. To do this, we must establish standards of treatment and scope of practice. As allied health professionals, we have the responsibility to research our methods of treatment and publish the results in peer-reviewed journals. This is the way to continue to lend credibility to what we do and how we do it. Global international journals help promote our professions and improve practice.

There are several avenues for publication to include discipline specific and discipline generic journals. Two that come to mind would be the journal you are currently reading, and the [Internet Journal of Allied Health Sciences and Practice](#). Print journals are fine, but circulation costs can be substantial. The internet is an excellent medium for the transfer of information, but only when it is done in a responsible manner through peer review. The speed of publication and ability to reach a larger audience makes the internet an optimal vehicle.

So how do we go about setting a global agenda for research and publication in the non-physician / non-nursing areas of healthcare? How do we set standards of care and scope of practice? We start by doing what I am doing now. We utilize multidisciplinary journals where all types of practitioners can comment and contribute. A manuscript from an audiologist on balance may be very interesting to a primary care physician assistant, or to a physiotherapist (physical therapist, USA.). A manuscript on pneumonia may catch the interest of a respiratory therapist, a family medicine physician assistant, a pulmonary technologist, a physiotherapist, or any number of other professions. A paper written by a respiratory therapist on pre-bronchoscopy anesthesia may be interesting to the registered nurse or pulmonary fellow.

Developing standards is the necessary piece of the puzzle in globalizing treatment-based methods. Organizations, such as the [Centre for Allied Health Evidence](#) at the University of South Australia, are paving the way for allied health practitioners in the areas of research, systematic review, evidence-based research of therapeutic intervention, and standardization of practice. Their areas of focus include physiotherapy, occupational therapy, podiatry, complementary and alternative therapies, and medical radiation. Further expansion in to the roles of other allied health practitioners is needed. Globalizing this effort is necessary in order to include all allied health professions who provide limited-supervision or unsupervised patient care. A global health institute or repository focusing on allied health is needed to expand the transfer of information to allied and paramedical professionals around the world.

To this end, a global health care initiative must be undertaken in order to reach this goal. Allied health and medicine research centers must be established in partnership throughout the world to share information, publication, and research. To do this, we need a concerted effort from allied health

researchers and publishers to make the information freely available for publication. Internet journals must share the burden to publish cross-linked manuscripts. Sharing copyright for the betterment of health care must be a goal. Of course, legalities will need to be ironed out, and ownership established, but it can be done. To this end, I asked that all of you reading this letter, begin to consider how to share information via the internet that will best work for all of us in the global field of allied health.

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