



**PROF. TAMONAS
CHAUDHURI**

Hony. Editor
MBBS, MS, FAIS, FMAS,
FACS, FACRSI (Hony)

Editorial

Why we should write....

“**S**hruti” the art of memorizing knowledge and passing it over from one generation to the next was the only medium of transfer of information from one person to another. However as such information gets communicated from one person to another to yet another or from one generation to another, the chance of distortion, error and modification of original data increases manifolds. Thus a piece of knowledge or wisdom which could have become a huge source of development for the future generation could become extinct or totally mutated into a mutilated form. Human civilization could still be struggling in solving their basics needs instead of progressing and developing as each generation would have to start every time from square one. We would still be struggling to fly an airplane or propel a ship across continents as we would not have an accumulated knowledge of the previous generation to bank upon. Let us further delve into this topic and later explore the relevancy of writing in context to our medical field.

“I never once failed at making a light bulb. I just found out 99 ways not to make one.” This famous statement from Thomas Alva Edison, the inventor of electric bulb shows clearly that history documents not only success but errors too which when passed on to the next generations will shield them from repeated flaws that can hinder progress. Writing thus is like the gift of gab to a writer who hones up his skill of writing on the anvil of practice and perfection. Writing can be therapeutic too. It can be a way to vent all the trapped frustrations taxing your mind into a far less volatile form, paper or screen. You can jot down your anger, fear, worry and stress. Writing can serve as a form of cathartic stress relief where you finally get to say what you can't say out loud, in real life. Writing to me is a

process of excavation of one's mind where the writer unearths his brewing ideas fermenting at the back of his mind and coding them on paper. As goes the saying – a pen is mightier than a sword and thus as a sword needs to be honed up regularly to maintain its cutting edge similarly a writer should write regularly to maintain as well as upgrade his writing skills. Writing regularly develops your analytical and rational skills. Working through your problems with a piece of paper encourages you to think things through clearly, in both linear (sequential) and non-linear (creative) ways. The best solutions come from a mix of both logical and creative thinking. Many people tend to panic and react emotionally to their problems, but if you're used to solving them by processing each component of the problem in writing, you'll develop a better approach and skill set. You'll at least pause to think through the situation before hitting the panic button next time something comes up! Discontentment, disillusionment, and unhappiness often come from forgetting why we're doing something (or, on a different track, not having a good reason for living a certain way) and it is important to keep those simple reasons at the forefront of your mind or you run the risk of letting your life become a series of boring, menial actions. It's not only important to remind yourself of your motives for your current actions; it's important to monitor your actions to see if they align with your life goals so that you can change them. Sometimes, the only way to keep such a close monitor on your actions and goals is to write about them every day.

Now comes the key question – ***Why should the medical professionals write?*** The Yale Internal Medicine Residency Writers Workshop was created in 2003 to provide a creative outlet for residents in internal medicine where Dr. Anna B. Reisman, teaches basic skills of writing. "Writing makes people better doctors because it increases their ability to be good observers," Reisman said. "They start to pay attention to details. If they're writing about a patient, we encourage them to notice not only what the patient

looks like, but ask, what are the sounds around the patient? What are the smells in the patient's room?" These skills help doctors notice more things about their patients, which helps boost empathy and diagnostic ability. "Learning the craft of writing requires that you learn how to reflect the perspective of others," Reisman said. "That's obviously a huge part of being a doctor." James Stubenrauch, Senior Fellow at the Center for Health, Media and Policy at Hunter College in the City University of New York (CUNY), co-taught the first narrative writing course to students in the Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing. Developing a daily writing practice, he said, helps nurses combat the burnout, exhaustion, fatigue and stress that comes with dealing with death and suffering. It also empowers them to speak up and take greater roles in decision-making. "For me personally, writing has been a way to understand myself and to think through experiences," Reisman explained. "If I'm writing an essay about an experience, trying to get it right forces me to really look at it deeply in a way that I might not do if I'm just running through it in my head. And when we're teaching residents, they start to understand that also."¹

But can Doctors write? Literature and Medicine is as far apart from each other as earth is from the sun or a galaxy is from another galaxy you may conclude but have you heard of these names - **Anton Chekhov, John Keats, Arthur Conan Doyle, William Carlos Williams, A J Cronin, W Somerset Maugham**. They are famous writers immortalized by their writings but do you know each and every one of them was physicians too! Who can forget the famous Bengali writer **Dr. Nihar Ranjan Gupta** the Indian counter part of Arthur Conan Doyle. Yes, but all of the above have enriched literature but can writing enhance medical progress? A Big Yes.

Documented evidences of doctor's interaction with their patients, their logical thought process in solving a certain critical cases et. al when documented can serve as a vital source of reference for other doctors in

future to turn back to and refer benefitting both the patients and the physicians.

“The physician treats with words; within the physician-patient social system, the patient is moved by fears and other sentiments, and these are modified by the physician’s words and phrases. Physicians dispense not only medicines but words that influence medicines or, all by themselves, that affect the patient more than the medicine” – DR MORGAN MARTIN². Now if words only can have such magical powers, written texts of well known doctors documenting their experiences with patients and their adventurous paths towards success could be as interesting as a sleuth story high in literal value as well as extremely valuable as records of treatment.

The induction of novice residents can be done with a case report. Faculty should realize that while a case report may not be a significant addition to their list of publications, for the student, it is the first but difficult step that helps them embark on a journey into the world of scientific writing³. Scientific writing is a learning process, and one masters this skill through experience⁴.

REFERENCES

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