

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

Re: Learning My ABC

A for apple, B for bat, C for cat... Although I am a highly educated professional I had forgotten my ABC. Not surprisingly, as days of squiggling medical jargon in the in-patient notes had diminished my writing agility to the primitive gurgles of a newborn baby. So with the boss away and a diminished workload, the Research Writing and Editing workshop seemed a nice way to refresh my pen. My last minute call to the secretary did get me a seat, although an extra one after cajoling her.

The workshop was organized by the team of the Bahrain Medical Bulletin, Dr. Jaffer Al Bareeq, and Dr. Fayek Al Hilli, under the auspices of International Corporation of Research Editing & Design (ICRD). The list also included guest speakers. It was held at the Bahrain Defence Force Hospital on the 16th and 17th of June, 2005.

The workshop commenced after a brief introduction with a comprehensive overview of the English grammar and punctuation by Dr. Al Bareeq. Then he skimmed over the principles pertaining to each part of a medical paper. Dr. Hilli stimulated our worn out imaginations along the paths of new ideas e.g., a difficult case, ward rounds, an everyday logistical problem, a comment from a colleague. Our infamous friends Mr. P value, chi square test, SD and SEM were introduced to us by Dr. Das (Consultant Biochemist). Then we were handed an original submitted paper for criticism the next day - talk about great expectations.

The second and the third sessions elaborated on the ethics and the individual components of a paper. Dr. Mona Ismail, a consultant gastroenterologist from King Fahad Hospital Saudi Arabia, highlighted the issues regarding research subjects, animals and humans. She also spoke about medical plagiarism, conflict of interests, gift authorship and their consequences. The rest of the sessions were spent analyzing the given paper. The application of the described principles illustrated the pitfalls of jotting down unorganized thoughts. And last but not the least we became writers by composing the methods of a hypothetical study.

Allah is the Source of all good ideas, big or small. Mr. Mohammed Ali took us through the field where these ideas are sown, in our brains. His brief talk "Positivity and Creativity" about our ability to develop and modify our internal image of the external universe was a breath of fresh air.

I enjoyed it, and so did all the other participants. All the sessions were arranged in a logical sequence, each building on the previous one. The well prepared talks sunk easily into our holiday mood minds. The process was facilitated by the interactive and informal nature of the workshop. Participant involvement was encouraged at every stage. Just the right blend of coffee. However, delivering the handouts a week before

for the participants to study and a session on audit would have been the icing on the cake. Congratulations to the team for waking up our pens.

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