

Editorial**Medical Research and Clinical Excellence Center: Research for Health and Medical Researchers for the Future**

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1. Does Bahrain need a medical research center?

Yes, it does need a medical research center. Bahrain has many rare diseases. Many common chronic diseases are found in Bahrain with an increased prevalence rate compared to other countries. Hemoglobinopathies, such as sickle cell and thalassemia are common in Bahrain. Many herbal compounds used in Bahrain for many generations; hardly any one has been subjected to pure scientific method of research to verify its true effectiveness or its side effects. Many compounds are used by Bahraini people, such as, Bukhoor and Kohl; the ingredients of which hardly been subjected to research. Fate plays an important role in the majority of Bahrainis' daily lives; therefore, patients' life perspective is different compared to others. The center will encourage critical reading, critical thinking and creativity.

Bahrain has many rare congenital anomalies, for example, hypospadias, anorectal malformation, congenital heart diseases, pelvi-ureteric junction obstruction, diaphragmatic hernia, undescended testis and Down's syndrome... etc. These need to be investigated in a cohort study to document the true incidence and to plan for prevention and future treatment.

Many common chronic diseases are found in Bahrain. Obesity is increasing among middle aged, females are affected most; recently, obesity started to affect children of affluent families. Obesity is without a doubt is associated with many incapacitating complications. Hypertension incidence is increasing among middle ages and elderly population. The complications of hypertension are well known to medical practitioners. Hyperlipidemia and ischemic heart disease are on the increase. Hardly any randomized cohort prospective study has been conducted for any of these diseases. The center would be able to conduct a cohort study on ischemic heart disease and based on that would draw a plan to improve coronary revascularization strategies of patients suffering from these conditions and to advance molecular genetics in cardiovascular disease.

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Transient ischemic attack and stroke are not rare in Bahrain. It is associated with morbidity which could tax even the affluent family. For the poor and the middle class, it is a great disaster, which could push them to destitution and the search for elderly home accommodation. In transient ischemic attack and stroke, the research center could investigate the best way of early intervention and the prevention of stroke by the using novel indices of risk; this will lead to an improved management and early recovery.

Hemoglobinopathies, such as, sickle cell and thalassemia constitute a major problem in Bahrain because of intermarriage. These two alone would be a good reason to establish a medical research center. It is difficult to ask the overstretched medical service to conduct a randomized cohort prospective study about these diseases. In hemoglobinopathies, the center could improve the lives of sicklers and thalassemia patients by participating in the study of identifying and validating new biomarkers in hematological diseases.

Many herbal compounds are available in Bahrain and are used for many conditions by qualified or non-qualified practitioner. Most of them never been analyzed in the laboratory to document their ingredients and never been tested through registered randomized controlled trials. The herbal practitioners claim that their products treat everything from the very minor ailment to cancer.

Bahrain has many compounds, such as, Bukhoor (scent), Kohl (cosmetic), Margadoosh (medical use) and Yansoon (medical use); the ingredients of all these compounds hardly been subjected to research. They are sold in the market without the ingredients spelled on the tin, the bottle or the packet, let alone specifying the side effects of these compounds. I am not implying that these compounds are bad, all what I am saying that they have not been investigated properly according to the current scientific criteria.

Fate plays an important role in the lives of the majority of Bahrainis. Bahrainis have different view of major ailment/treatment compared with their counterpart in Britain or USA. Many of them would reject major surgery based on the conviction that “it is his destiny to suffer” and many would not allow removal of a limb or major organ based on the belief that he/she would be resurrected incomplete. That attitude has never been researched and how far it influences the outcome of particular treatment has never been tested. Could that attitude be changed or modified through research.

The greatest advantage of the center that it will encourage critical reading, critical thinking and creativity; it would be a real deviation from “learn the knowledge/duty by heart, listen but do not ask question”. The center would encourage a generation of creative and innovative people who would enrich the medical field and in return they would bring a great benefits to the patients. These researchers need to be looked after, encouraged and rewarded, not to be neglected and antagonized. Researchers should be classified as special category, which would be judged by their peers of researchers rather than judged by people who hardly conducted any research. Medical service professionals do great job for the present, but medical researchers work for the future of medicine.

2. Does Bahrain Have the Budget for Such Center?

The answer is yes and no. No, if the government will shoulder the total responsibility, it may not have the budget to support it. Yes, if the government is willing to take part of the responsibility and encourage the private sector to participate, that way was done in many countries. The center would save millions for the government by finding the best and most efficient way to treat any condition; the most efficient medication to be purchased for public consumption, not to forget the tremendous patient's benefits. The center would help the translation of clinical research into practice and health policy and to translate epidemiological findings into methods of screening and prevention, in turn this will result in better human health for Bahraini population.

The main objective of medical research center is to engage the different health disciplines, medical professionals and patients to advance medical research and healthcare delivery.

The center aims to produce research which has long-term benefits that have the potential to improve the health of patients in Bahrain.

The center would give priority to procedures treating health problems according to their real health impact and the public expense they generate.

The center will promote quality research and enhance the opportunity for medical and paramedical professionals to conduct research relevant to the patients; the center will ensure that research is used to improve health policy and practice of medicine in Bahrain.

Surgically, the center aim is to evaluate the surgical procedures, which are practiced in Bahrain and evaluate their effectiveness in Bahraini patients and Bahrain surroundings, promote the use of those that are proven effective and advice against the use of others. The center would save a lot of economic resources by applying rigorous research methods, which ensures the validity of the procedure. The center would be open to questioning by the professionals and public for its existing knowledge and the usefulness of the procedure.

The center would promote national, regional and international collaborations in science and medical research for the sake of improving health; the center would create strong linkages between the universities, business, and the community. The center would continue the search for new field of science and medical research relevant to improving the health of patients.

The center would be able to allocate the time and the funds for those clinicians interested in research rather than to depend on overstretched practitioners, therefore, the traditional excuse, "lack of funds and time", will no longer applicable.

The medical research center would assume the responsibility of Institutional Review Board (IRB). The purpose of the IRB is to review research and determine if the rights and welfare of human subjects are adequately protected. The IRB can approve, require modification or disapprove all research activities. A researcher must report injuries to

subjects, and the IRB must report to the concerned institution. Evaluating a research is a continuing review process based upon progress reports to IRB.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the great initiative of Dr Fawzi Amin, the assistant undersecretary, to establish a national committee for research, to which he invited all those concerned with research in Bahrain (medical journals, universities and hospitals). Such initiative should be encouraged by authorities, NGOs, political societies and private sector. It should not be allowed to die similar to many great ideas which had disappeared. The initiator has to carry the flame and others have to support him.

Please send your support for the establishment of Medical Research and Clinical Excellence Center to: jmab@batelco.com.bh. Your support, comment and suggestion would count for the future. It will take few minutes to do so.