I could never do research

My recent career move into allied health education has served as a reminder of the importance of research in healthcare. Whether we, as perioperative practitioners, perform a clinical audit, evaluate a service, explore a patient’s experience or undertake a large-scale research project, the results from all types of studies shape what we do in practice and also what we teach in both pre- and post-graduate education. This month’s Journal of Perioperative Practice recognises the importance of perioperative research by bringing together a collection of papers detailing the results from a variety of studies carried out by perioperative practitioners.

Mike Phillips and Matthew Harris examine public perception of healthcare professionals’ titles and the function they actually perform within the anaesthetic team; their results make for interesting reading.

The benefits of graduated compression stockings in the prevention of venous thromboembolism (VTE) are well recognised, however Teresa Donnelly and Bernie McNeely found inconsistencies in their use. Auditing current practice against local and national protocols enabled them to make recommendations for a number of changes in practice within their organisation.

Staying with VTE prophylaxis, CU Menakaya and colleagues used a multi-professional team approach to evaluate patient experience of an innovative service for orthopaedic patients in an outpatient setting. Now, if you are reading this and the articles in this month’s journal and thinking to yourself ‘I could never do that’, then you are not alone. This was my exact thought before I commenced my research dissertation three years ago and is an understandable but totally unnecessary reaction. As registered healthcare professionals we all have an obligation to evaluate practice and participate in the collection of data for research. For some though, the thought of undertaking a research study is totally unnerving but it doesn’t need to be. In collaboration with Susan Hall, I have written a series of four articles that we hope will demystify the research process and encourage you to undertake a research project. Having both undertaken research dissertations, we hope to share our experiences and leave you with the idea that research is not daunting; it can be fascinating and even enjoyable once you know the process and have adequate support systems in place. The series kicks off this month with our first article ‘An introduction to the research process’ which examines the importance of healthcare research and identifies each stage of a research project.

The second and third articles in the series, to be published in later editions, will explore the theoretical frameworks of qualitative and quantitative research studies respectively, providing perioperative practitioners with an insight into the two research methodologies. The last of the four articles will provide information on writing a dissertation and guidance on publishing your research findings.

I hope reading the articles in this edition inspire you to undertake a clinical audit or research project and look forward to reading the results from your studies when they are published in a future edition of this Journal.

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