

Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons: Evolution of Dissertation and Thesis

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Abstract:

Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCPS), is a constitutional professional academic organization that confers Fellowship (FCPS) and Membership (MCPS) in various specialties in the field of medicine. As a part of evaluation system, BCPS is responsible for continued improvisation of quality assurance process of the Dissertations/Thesis out of a quality research of global standard. On the occasion of golden Jubilee celebration, an effort to document the gradual progression of the system of learning and performing a research and publishing the results by fellows is made through this article.

A sub-committee of 6 members assigned by BCPS Journal committee in a group meeting decided to search BCPS library for dissertations and Thesis, dissertations and thesis database of Research and Training Monitoring Department (RTMD), college office for related documents and websites to collect data regarding evolution of thesis/dissertation of BCPS and other institutions at home and abroad. The purpose of this narrative is to describe the evolution of the Dissertation/Thesis at the BCPS, Dhaka.

Introduction

Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCPS), established in 1972, could raise itself to a Prestigious Institution through its relentless quality improvement efforts in Post-Graduate Medical education in Bangladesh. The College bears a heritage to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan (CPSP). Following the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, BCPS was established by a Presidential Order in June 1972.¹ Since then It remained dynamic and proactive to

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Until January 2022, a total of 12,575 dissertations and 355 Thesis have been accepted by BCPS. Year wise distribution of outcomes of submitted dissertations from 2010-2022 and thesis submission rate in different specialties are promising. Over the last 50 years, there have been many revisions to the Dissertation submission and assessment guidelines. Funding for research, Mandatory training, training of the trainers, Specialty wise log-book and gradual introduction of regular monitoring of training and research, e-log book, thesis defense all are the few components of evolution of thesis/dissertation over the years.

BCPS council and Research and Training Monitoring Committee (RTMC) strongly believe that there is always room for improvement in the quality assurance process for the research work leading to Thesis submission. This will pave the way for research, publication of articles in renowned journals and collaborative works in future.

Key words: BCPS, Dissertation, Thesis.

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accept global standards and norms and taking actions to upgrade the existing systems. BCPS has a track record of performance as an organization providing highest level of Specialist Health Manpower including teachers in the country. Its main purpose is as a certifying organization for post-graduate medical education offering FCPS and MCPS degrees on ever expanding medical field and evolving new disciplines. It also acts as an accrediting organization for the Medical Institutes offering fellowship training and courses. It has its vision and mission of providing specialist medical care as well as contribution to generation of new knowledge especially considering needs of our country.² BCPS is maintaining standards of Quality, integrity, equity and free from biases throughout this journey. Research and Training Monitoring Department (RTMD) has been established to achieve these cherished goals and has become an essential department since the inception. RTMD is involved in selecting and also responsible for monitoring the post-graduate training sites and the trainees as per Standard Operation Procedures. The

department is also responsible for approval and quality assurance process of the Dissertations/Thesis out of a quality research. The Dissertation (and now Thesis) is a pre-requisite for appearing in final Fellowship certification examinations. With the introduction of Thesis format from 2020, the trainees now have to defend their work in front of the examiners,³ while previously, Dissertations were sent to the reviewers.

Methodology:

A sub-committee was formed by the journal committee. Members of the sub- committee met together at RTMD of BCPS. They planned and distributed tasks amongst them for completion in four weeks period. All documents were identified. Meeting minutes of college council, notifications and other necessary data were collected from RTMD office as well as from BCPS administration. Information were also taken from the BCPS website. Lists of accepted dissertations were gathered from library. Other facts were collected by personal communications. All these particulars since inception of BCPS till now were collected.

Results:

Evolution to the current Thesis Format

BCPS started with the certification of FCPS in six subjects, namely Internal Medicine, Surgery, ‘Gynecology and Obstetrics’ and Pediatrics, Ophthalmology and Ear, Nose and throat Disease.^{4,5} First examination of BCPS was held in July 1972. Some candidates who appeared in this examination had their dissertation submitted and accepted in 1971 were sent to Karachi center of CPSP but did not appear due to our Liberation war. The first dissertations, after establishment of BCPS, in medicine, surgery & ‘Gynaecology & Obstetrics’ were done in 1972, and Pediatrics in 1973. The credit for the 1st dissertations goes to Prof. Alamgir Mohiuddin Kabir (Medicine), Prof. Dewan Eklimur Raza Chowdhury and Prof Lokman Ali (Surgery), Prof. Jahanara Begum (‘Gynaecology & Obstetrics’) and Prof. Md. Abdul Hamid Shaikh (Pediatrics). Prof. Gazi Mohammed Zakir Hossain submitted first thesis in urology and was accepted after defense in 2002.

Until January 2022, a total of 12,572 dissertations and 355 Thesis have been accepted by BCPS. All dissertations are achieved and enlisted in accession

Table-I

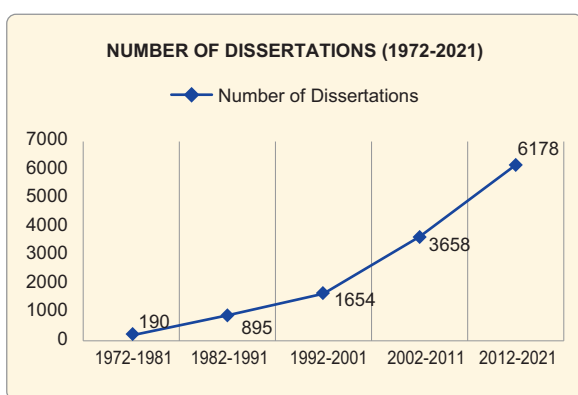
*Year wise distribution of dissertation
from 1972 to 2021*

Year	Number of dissertation
1972	9
1973	7
1974	14
1975	16
1976	11
1977	7
1978	21
1979	19
1980	70
1981	16
1982	38
1983	21
1984	56
1985	39
1986	74
1987	107
1988	116
1989	154
1990	139
1991	151
1992	116
1993	123
1994	50
1995	147
1996	249
1997	254
1998	219
1999	151
2000	134
2001	211
2002	213
2003	228
2004	300
2005	301
2006	390
2007	483
2008	403
2009	441
2010	669
2011	230
2012	624
2013	1155
2014	401
2015	1010
2016	406
2017	492
2018	560
2019	529
2020	522
2021	479

Table-II*Showing 10 year wise distribution of dissertation*

Year	Number of Dissertations
1972-1981	190
1982-1991	895
1992-2001	1654
2002-2011	3658
2012-2021	6178

register of BCPS library.⁶ Figure 1 shows year wise trend of acceptance of dissertations which was about two fold increasing in every decade. Table 3 shows only about 10% dissertations were accepted without corrections, corrections were needed in 80-90% cases. Table 4 shows the total number of accepted theses over the years. The first dissertations contributed to the developments of Guidance for Dissertation submission and assessments. Over the last 50 years, there have been many revisions to the Dissertation submission and assessment guidelines². The RTMD, BCPS were regularly conducting training programs, workshops, training of trainers (TOT) on Research Methodology since 1999 to improve the quality of research conducted by its trainees. Later in July 2010, Research Methodology Training for three days has been made compulsory for FCPS part I completed trainees in all disciplines. In its recent updating, BCPS has approved compulsory four day workshop on Research

**Fig.-1:** Increase in number of dissertations (Ten Year interval).

Data Source: Records of Library and Archives, BCPS

Methodology leading to development of trainees own proposal. RTMD also started a Research Clinic recently to provide various technical and methodological supports for trainee researchers. BCPS has started funding the Thesis proposals by its trainees. RTMD will supervise all the research works on a 3 monthly basis. The introduction of E-log book will further enhance the capacity of RTMD to monitor researches done by its trainees.

Table-III*Year wise distribution of outcomes of submitted dissertations from 2010-2022*

Year	Dissertation submitted	Correction Request	Dissertation Accepted
2022	397	200	241
2021	516	403	494
2020	567	497	554
2019	512	379	499
2018	539	457	530
2017	634	575	628
2016	572	494	564
2015	695	585	680
2014	739	658	727
2013	768	645	753
2012	750	655	712
2011	623	548	605
2010(July)	269	194	260
Grand Total	7581	6290	7247

Data Source: Dissertation Database of RTMD, BCPS

Table-IV*Year wise number of accepted Thesis (2014 to 2022)*

Year	Accession No. of Thesis	Total
2014	00001-00101	101
2016	00102-00131	30
2017	00132-00160	29
2018	00161-00198	38
2019	00199-00224	26
2020	00225-00269	45
2022	00270-00355	86

Total number of thesis = 355

Data Source: Records of Library and Archives, BCPS

Ever Increasing field of specialties and Thesis

The growing number of sub-specialties and trainees, and a transition from Dissertation to Thesis (2020), is increasing the workload at the institute and hence the quality assurance process. In its relentless quality improvement process, BCPS started funding the researchers, Guides & Co-guides for their Thesis works. Apart from the summative assessment (Thesis defense) of the Thesis, the RTMD is developing updated monitoring guidelines for the research conducted by its trainees. RTMD will monitor both the financial and implementation of the approved research proposals as part of its quality assurance process. The digital E-log book once available would further improve real time monitoring of the process and the outcome. RTMD has recently introduced a "Research Clinic" conceptualized long back by BCPS to offer technical and logistic support to its trainees on a continuous basis round the year. Research Clinic now has two full-time epidemiologists who would be able to respond to the methodological and data management issues. Further helps will be available from the Subject specialists in special situations.

The appropriate documentation for the number and fate of the dissertation submitted are available from 2010 and is shown in Table I. The numbers were increasing except last 2 years, because of transition from Dissertation to Thesis. The year-wise line-diagram shows the increasing number of submissions over time (Figure-1). BCPS is committed to further improvement of the Institutional capacity to support quality of research conducted by its trainees.

Review system for Dissertations and Protocol submission

During initial period dissertations submitted were accepted through certification of supervisor. Standard operative procedure guidelines for dissertation was developed by BCPS authority to ensure quality of research work.² Review of submitted dissertations were being done individually by two different reviewers appointed by examination committee. In case of disagreement a third reviewer was appointed for evaluation. After the establishment of RTMD in 2009, all the Protocol and Dissertation Review has been conducted by the RTMD. After 2013 according to the Council decision now review have been done at RTMD offices. A subcommittee (consisting of 3-5 members)

from each faculty of BCPS selects the reviewers of respective specialty for evaluation of dissertation/thesis protocol and dissertation/thesis. Subcommittee members of different faculties come to the RTMD and select the reviewers. RTMD plays the coordinating role in the total work.

Existing procedure of RTMD, BCPS for Dissertation/ Thesis Protocol

To enhance quality of research, after passing FCPS Part-I every trainee has to attend 3/4 days training workshop on Research Methodology. Trainee submits the protocol to Ethical Committee, subsequently it goes to the RTMD, then after Protocol reviewing meeting by a committee of 3-5 members of the specialty, the submitted protocol are sent to the reviewer for correction, acceptance or rejection. Finally, RTMD issues the acceptance letter to the trainee. On the other hand, the dissertations are reviewed by the two reviewers. Protocol should be submitted 9 months and for dissertation 3 months before appearing FCPS part II exam for the students who passed their FCPS part I exam before January 2010. The protocol submission time has been changed to 18 months before and for dissertation 6 months before appearing FCPS Part II exam for the students who passed their FCPS part I exam on and after July 2010 up to July 2019. Thesis writing, submission and thesis defense has been become mandatory prerequisite for different subspecialties since 2002 and from January 2020 for all the trainees. RTMD plays a vital role in the whole process.

Training of trainees

As mentioned earlier, there have been significant shifts in the way training will be conducted. The new four day workshop will lead trainees to develop their own protocols and learn to critically appraise the medical literature. The training module has been developed to achieve the objectives. The facilitators and trainers have been oriented. With time the increasing number of trainees, RTMD has to develop the critical mass of facilitators and trainers and RTMD will be working to achieve the numbers. With the provision of research incentives (compensation) for the trainees and guides was a very necessary step achieved. Appropriate utilization of the Research Clinic and appropriate monitoring by RTMD will contribute improving the quality of Research done by trainees.

Training of trainers

Trainers, facilitators, reviewers, guides and co-guides are not sufficient to meet the needs at the BCPS because of

multiple reasons, especially their multifarious commitments. BCPS recognizes the need and has taken multiple steps to increase the motivation and availability of these personals. Periodic CMEs and training workshops were held at the BCPS for the trainers, guides and reviewers. RTMD has taken actions to systematically improve the critical numbers of trainers and facilitators by widening the scale of involvements and trainings.

Quality assurance

BCPS council and Research and Training Monitoring Committee (RTMC) strongly believe that there is room for improvement in the quality assurance process for the research work leading to Thesis submission. Currently the approval process, funding, continued monitoring and 'Thesis defense' systems have been updated. Reviewers, guides and trainers are repeatedly being trained and updated on the quality assurance process. Institutional Training Monitoring Committees (ITMC) has been formed in different medical colleges to monitor training and research locally and institutionally.

Discussion:

Competency in carrying out a research is an essential element of post graduate medical education like other higher education. A thesis or dissertation out of a quality research during post-graduation is considered first practical experience that will help doing research in the field of specialty. This also helps development of expertise in own specialty and also to keep oneself updated through understanding of research results published in journals. Dissertation was a pre requisite for MRCOG.⁷ Dissertation is also a pre-requisite for fellowship in all specialities in CPSP.⁵ BCPS has also adopted same policy to ensure capacity building of fellows in all specialities, a step to encourage research and new knowledge growth according to the need of the country. Similar policy of writing thesis or dissertation is also present in post-graduate courses of BSMMU,⁸ Dhaka university⁹, Oxford university¹⁰, All India Institute of medical science (AIIMS).¹¹ BCPS from 2020 has adopted the regulation of submission of Thesis for all trainees in all specialties and have to pass Thesis defense examination as a pre-requisite to appear final Fellowship examination. This is expected to add to the competency in research

Looking for future

Despite all the actions, BCPS need to go a long way to further improve the research conducted by its trainees. The development of the critical mass of Guides, co-guides, and reviewers is crucial. The application of the quality assurance process would be challenging. But

the BCPS and the RTMD are committed to achieve the objectives. Digital archiving of the Thesis works and their publications could further improve the institutional memory of the contribution of its fellows.

BCPS should consider publishing an "Academic year Book containing synopsis of all the thesis accepted by BCPS and also outstanding papers published by our fellows in different Journals and reports of other academic activities like workshops and seminars. To give more impetus to research work, college can introduce a system of recognizing outstanding Thesis every year.

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