

Symposia and Conferences in Healthcare: Time To Break Tradition

Education is the fundamental tool to meet the challenges on socio-economic, cultural, demographic, environmental, ethical or technological frontiers. This stands valid for an individual, organization, country and even globally for that matter. Odds of having successful outcomes of these challenges primarily depend upon how efficiently, intelligently, sincerely and honestly the said tool has been used. If we go through the success stories of developed countries, we come across that conferences and symposia have been the sentinel pathways used for educating a wider population. These symposia and conferences invite everybody to reflect on what a 'new' education could look like in order to meet the requirements of a region and rest of the world. This has been found the best way of sharing knowledge and experience of various participants from different part of the world.

Similarly in healthcare, conferences and symposia have played a vital role as in these events healthcare providers from various part of the world discuss the problems and issues in the field of health, new trends, innovations, developments and research. The positive outcome of such academic events and its reflection upon the society is quite evident in the developed countries. On the other hand, we don't find such outcomes in the developing countries and also in out part of the world. We personally feel that in developed countries, both organizers and participants are more focused on academic weightage and knowledge dissemination during a particular event. To utilize the time allocated for meal break, they have inserted education into lunch and breakfast sessions too. The important parameter of a successful conference is number of registrations of participants and number of audience attending a session. For participants, local weather, venue, accommodation, academic content of scientific sessions and background of speakers are the main sources of attraction. Many of us who have attended these conferences and symposia must have observed heavy attendance of audience throughout the conferences and in most of the sessions too. Furthermore, the quality of talks, discussion and QA sessions are used to be of high standards and evidence based.

Unfortunately in developing countries like Pakistan, the medical symposia and conferences could not produce the desired impact. Security threats and law and order conditions in country are the main reasons for thin attendance of speakers and participants from abroad. Scientific committees of these conferences do try to design good grid but lack of participation of foreign speakers, who are considered authority on a subject, fails to attract serious participants who believe in "spend to learn". This leaves those participants who are less serious in academic content and scholastic gain and try to use these events for social contacts and mingling. This is reflected by very thin attendance in scientific sessions but very heavy and mammoth participation in social events in evening. This is obviously disturbing and disappointing for the organizers who have worked hard to collect the finance, arranging the logistics, formulating the scientific program with a sincere aim of knowledge dissemination. It is also not a happy situation for vendors who have funded generously these conferences.

The question is how to make our conferences and symposia more meaningful and more attractive to participants? To address this issue we need to have open debates and group discussion to find strategies in order to make these academic events meaningful. We need to give importance to content and quality of academics and invited speakers and minimize the social or extracurricular content. This would definitely be more attractive to serious participants to attend these meeting with a motive to learn and contribute to uplift the healthcare in Pakistan. We honestly feel that time has come to break us from tradition to contribute and accomplish our professional responsibilities for uplift of healthcare in Pakistan using this important tool.

"You Must Be In Tune With The Times And prepared To Break With Tradition – James Agee"

Maseeh uz Zaman,¹ Nosheen Fatima,¹ Areeba Zaman,² Sidra Zaman²

¹ Department of Radiology, Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH), Karachi, Pakistan

² Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan.